No. 806. Week ending June 11, 1904.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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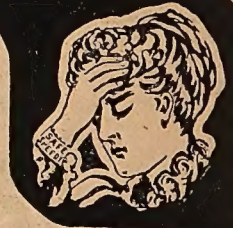

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SHORT STORIES

No. 806.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 11th, 1904.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY.

Relating the Events That Happened Therein.

GRACE and I were inseparable friends. We were "two daughters of one race"—that is to say, cousins in the third degree; but there the likeness ended, for, as Tennyson puts it, "she was the fairer in the face," and rich, while I was only a poor little insignificant nursery-governess. It was a wonder to me how a creature so divinely made could so love plain little me; but, as I said before, we were inseparable.

We were both orphans; her father died, leaving all his large fortune to his only child. My parents died, leaving me an empty pocket, but too proud a heart to live—as she implored me to—on her ample means.

A great and unexpected pleasure had come to me that summer of which I write. Grace's aunt on her father's side had written her to come and spend a summer in her country home, and had told her to take me also.

I, whom the very sight of a mound of sweet-scented hay almost sent crazy, and to whom the dream of strolling through country lanes, filling my hands full of flowers, and my heart full of love to the Giver of so much beauty, was as a dream of Paradise—I was invited to spend a summer in the country.

We started, Grace and I. I noticed how everyone turned and looked at the stately figure in its dainty dress; and in my love I said:

"Queen Grace, how beautiful you are!"

Softly laughing, she touched my cheek with her finger.

"Wait till three months from now, when this pale, thin cheek has rounded out, and see who will be beautiful then."

Mrs. Rogers' carriage, an old-fashioned country vehicle, awaited us at the station, and there, holding the door open was the most handsome young man I have ever seen.

He helped us in, and then clambered to his seat.

As soon as the wheels were in motion, and we could talk without being heard, I asked Grace if she had noticed what a handsome face our driver had. Grace looked at me a little surprised for a moment and then, with a comical expression in her dark eyes, lectured me thus:

"Dot, you romantic, foolish child! You are so infatuated with the country that the glamour extends over everything you see, I verily believe. Why, Phil is only a fair specimen of a country youth; you'll see plenty of them before you go home."

When we reached the house I almost screamed with delight. It was a low, long building, built of stone and covered with ivy, which grew and twined around every quaint, lattice-framed window. At the door stood Mrs. Rogers' housekeeper; but no hospitable lady was there, ready to greet her guests with cordial welcome.

"Why, Betsy, where's auntie?" asked Grace as we alighted.

Then Betsy informed us that Mrs. Rogers had been called suddenly away to nurse a friend through a severe illness, who, living all alone, had no one to care for her.

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"She told me to tell you, Miss Grace, to make yourselves at home, and do and have everything you wish, and in a week she hopes to be back."

And so we found ourselves, two young girls, mistresses of a great place, with permission to do just what we chose for a week.

The next morning we set out after breakfast to take a long ramble—a "tour of discovery," Grace called it. We walked soberly along for a time, but the exhilarating country air fired my blood, and I proposed a race.

Grace, that tree—who'll reach it first?" And off we started.

We must have looked very odd, running at the top of our speed, and Grace particularly so; for her luxuriant hair came loose and fell in a heavy, gleaming shower all over her radiant face.

Just then a pony trap rolled along, and leaning back in it as if weary, while the coachman drove, was a gentleman.

He turned as he passed, and favoured us with a glance from the blackest eyes set in the whitest face I ever saw.

"Oh, Dot! this is dreadful! Look at my hair!" said Grace.

With my aid she soon fastened it up, and we resumed our walk, and continued it more quietly.

When we reached home we described the pony trap to Betsy.

"Oh, yes, that's Mr. Ralph Ogden. Your aunt knows him, Miss Grace. He bought the Waverley place last spring, and has been there ever since. He is a great invalid, and leads a lonely life, I should think."

"Poor young man! How sad it must be to have ill-health," said Grace; while I thought how lovely she looked with compassion in her sweet eyes.

In the afternoon we were all ready for anything that might turn up, and who should come to the sitting-room door but Phil, to know if we would like a ride. So we started. We chatted along together for a while, and then a deep voice chimed in the conversation.

The haughty little head beside me erected itself a trifle more haughtily. But I replied, for I liked the handsome, manly young fellow from the very first, and why was I to feel above him simply because he wore rough clothes and worked on a farm? Of course, it was different with Grace. We soon were engaged in an animated conversation. I felt no small degree of amazement at his versatile power of expression on any of the topics, some of which I acknowledged I mischievously touched upon to try him.

Before a great while Grace's hauteur vanished, and then it would have been hard to find three gayer, more joyous young people.

That night in our room Grace made the discovery that she had lost her comb, a pretty thing of pearl and tortoise-shell.

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We saw a good deal of Philip after that first day, and Betsy looked on with a pleased though rather odd smile, I thought, as we came in time after time from frolics in the barn or fields, and she saw Phil leave us at the door.

It was three days after the race in which Grace lost her comb, when we were surprised to see that same pony trap roll through the farm-gate up to the door. Betsy brought a little package to our room, and it was explained.

It was the lost comb, and with it a note which ran thus :

"LADIES,—*Excuse the liberty I take in addressing you. The inclosed comb was found by my man on Tuesday afternoon. As I met two young ladies this morning very near the place where it was found, I presumed it must belong to one of them. In conclusion, let me say that if at any time you would like to ramble through my grounds, you may do so with no fear of intrusion.—Yours respectfully,*

"RALPH OGDEN."

We had often looked with longing eyes into the exquisitely laid out grounds, and so we made up our minds to avail ourselves of the permission just received.

"Ah!" thought I, "here is the romance I always expected would come to Grace. This young man will meet her, fall in love, get well, and so forth, and so forth."

And already I beheld my queen, robed in white, standing before the altar. I stopped there with a little internal laugh at my own folishness.

To return to my story. We started the next day, and, after a time, found ourselves walking through fairy-land. What a bewilderment of beauty each step revealed! Circles of many-hued flowers, with fountains playing in their fragrant midst. Here and there a laughing Flora or a gay Terpsichore, peeped in snowy marble from the background of vivid green. Finally, quite tired out with admiring, we seated ourselves on a tempting rustic seat.

"What a pity such a charming place hasn't more people to enjoy it? Mr. Ogden should have a wife. Don't you think so, Dot?"

I did not answer, but motioned Grace to be still, for, looking round, I had seen a pitiful sight. Behind the clump of trees near which we sat was swung a hammock very near the ground. In it lay Mr. Ogden. His right leg seemed to be in some kind of bandage, to which was attached a weight. I was again struck by his extreme pallor, and, even with his eyes closed—for he was asleep—by the expression of pain and suffering on his face.

By this time Grace had seen the reason of my motion, and we stood for a moment in silence, then turned and retraced our steps. It seemed very sad to us, buoyant with life and health, to see one with so much to enjoy marking the moments only by the pain they brought.

So the week passed, and Monday brought Mrs. Rogers back again.

I loved her at once as I saw how she took my darling in her arms, first held her off to admire her, and then kissed her again and again.

"And this is the Dot I have heard so much of? My dear, I feel as if I knew you already."

I noticed what a bright, merry twinkle the kind eyes had in them, and knew our good times had only begun. Of course, it soon was told how we had spent our time and all about everything. When I told her how very kind Phil had been, and how many pleasures we had enjoyed through him, Mrs. Rogers' face fairly beamed.

"There! I knew when I told Phil to see to you how well he would do it!"

It was not often I had seen Queen Grace blush, but as I glanced at her then, for some unaccountable reason, her face was rosy red to the little ear tips.

Then we told the incident of the comb. We found Mrs. Rogers was well acquainted with Mr. Ogden, and we learnt the cause of his isolation and delicate health.

He and his mother had been living in London the previous winter. They were all in all to each other, her husband being dead and he the only child. There broke out an awful fire in their house one cold, windy night, and all that human aid could do failed to check the fell destroyer. Wakened out of a deep sleep by the terrible cry of "Fire!" the son's first thought was of his mother. Springing from his bed, he rushed into the hall, only to be driven back by the mingled smoke and flame. Again he attempted to gain his mother's room, and succeeded. By that time a ladder was up to the window, and voices below clamoured for him to hasten, for his life was in danger.

With his now unconscious burden in his arms, he began to descend, when, with a great crash, and amid cries of horror, the ladder broke, and precipitated them to the ground below. Mrs. Ogden never wakened from her merciful unconsciousness, and for weeks her son lay between life and death.

"He will never have the use of his right leg," said Mrs. Rogers, as we sat listening with suspended breath, "although the doctors think after a time he will be able to walk without pain, with the aid of a crutch."

Now our hostess had returned, the time flew more rapidly than ever. She introduced us to the girls of the neighbourhood; sweet, modest country girls, with that innate refinement that stamps the lady in town or country.

We finally became acquainted with Mr. Ogden. Some time after we first met him Grace's aunt gave a garden-party. Mr. Ogden was invited, but of course we never thought for a moment he would come. There could not be much pleasure in such an affair to one in his delicate health.

So we thought, but he did come.

Grace looked more like a queen than ever; and as we sat together I noticed Mr. Ogden's eyes seemed to have a persistent habit of wandering our way.

I never did see so much enjoyment in anyone's face as shone in Mr. Ogden's as he watched the merry games in which Philip—not in his working suit to-day—and Grace were always leaders. I sat by him for a long while, doing my little best to entertain him, and being most splendidly entertained instead. He told me of his travels in sunny Italy and vine-clad France, and then of the stern beauties of the snow-capped peaks of Switzerland; and I, who had never been out of England, listened, if not "open-mouthed," very near it.

Never had I seen my calm Grace so wildly, fitfully gay as she was all that day; and I was startled that night to awake and hear her sobbing violently. Alarmed, I asked what was the matter. Then lying cheek to cheek in the darkness, Grace confessed to me that she had lost her heart.

"And, oh, Dot," she whispered, "I have something to tell you—no one knows it but auntie—I am betrothed, and not to the one I love. He was a cousin of my father's, and, of course, the same relation to auntie. When papa died, he made me promise solemnly that I would keep true to the agreement he made with the young man's father, that when their children grew up they should marry. He said he would die happier, knowing my future was secure, and I wouldn't be married for my fortune."

"Where is he, Grace?" I asked.

"He is abroad. I never saw him, Dot, for when he visited my father and stated his willingness to carry out his parent's wishes, I was at school."

"But, darling, if you don't love him, will you marry him?"

She turned wearily and kissed me.

"Dot, I never broke my word, and I never will."

It did not occur to me to ask Grace who it was she loved, for of course I knew. There was only one, in my eyes, who was noble enough in rank, wealth, and qualities of mind and heart to mate with my darling. Long after she had fallen asleep, I was conscious of a dull pain at my own heart. We had both of us seen a great deal of Mr. Ogden, and I had grown to find his friendship very sweet.

"Does being married change one's feelings for one's friends I wonder?" was my last thought as I, too, fell asleep.

Then came the climax to all the wonderful days of that wonderful summer. The following afternoon Mrs. Rogers

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came and told me that Mr. Ogden wanted to see me in the library.

"To see me? Are you sure it isn't Grace?" I asked.

"Quite sure," she answered; and I went down, speculating much in my mind what he could want of me. Before I quite got to the door I thought I knew.

He, too, wanted to make a confidante of me, and to tell me of his love for my friend.

Smiling to myself at the idea, I went in.

He stood awaiting me, leaning on his crutches.

"Oh, Mr. Ogden, don't stand!" I cried, and hastened to wheel an easy chair towards him.

A slight frown passed over his face.

"Miss Dot, indeed it causes me scarcely any pain to use my limb now; it is growing rapidly better."

But he sat down, and I took a seat near him. It was nearer than I should have supposed, for before I knew what was happening, I found myself drawn close to his side, and completely incircled by his arms. And these were the words I heard:

"Oh, my little darling! My precious little one! Don't you know how madly I love you?"

Aghast, I drew myself away, although it was bliss to stay there, for, oh, what I then felt never comes twice in a lifetime; and I knew it was love. Still, I drew myself away.

His beautiful, pale face flushed as he let me go, and said in an infinitely sad tone:

"Can it be possible that it wasn't love I have seen looking at me from those bonny brown eyes?"

Then I faltered out that I thought it was Grace he loved; and, as I spoke, an overwhelming sense of pain at the thought of what my darling had told me, and of the grief she must suffer, caused me to break down, and, hiding my face, burst into a passion of tears.

How he comforted me I cannot tell, but I was comforted; and whether it was disloyal or not, I couldn't help it. When he asked me again, I told him all he wanted to know—how I loved him, and him only, passionately, entirely.

I must have looked like a guilty thing when, after he had gone, I went into the room where Grace and her aunt were. Mrs. Rogers said, as I came in:

"Well, dear, are we to congratulate you or not?"

I stole a shamefaced look at Grace, and there she stood, dimpling and smiling at my confusion. With a sudden rush I sprang to her arms, and was clasped to her heart. I saw I had made a mistake, and it wasn't my Ralph whom she loved.

Afterwards I would have been as happy as a mortal could be if it hadn't been for Grace, who, after the first joy for me was over, became very quiet again.

Ralph took us all over my future home. (It didn't seem possible to imagine little me amid such magnificence.) In his room he showed me a sketch of a lovely face, and I knew directly who it was, for it was a copy of his own.

Mrs. Rogers had persisted in my being married from her house, and as Ralph wished it to be so soon, it was arranged that I was not to return to town until I was a bride. The day was drawing very near, and as I sat singing lightly over my sewing, Grace suddenly rushed into the room, and, handing me a letter, sank on the floor by my side all in a heap. It was from Mr. Leith (her betrothed), and he was coming to claim his promised bride that evening.

"Dot," she said, with her face hidden on my lap, "do you know who it is that I love?"

Now, since I knew it wasn't Ralph, I had often wondered who had won Grace's heart, and had made up my mind it must be someone in her fashionable town circle whom I had never met. My surprise may be imagined when, on replying that I didn't know, she said it was Philip.

"Queen Grace, you in love with a farmer boy!"

I did not intend to wound, but Grace sprang to her feet with flashing eyes.

"Dot, I am disappointed in you. Cannot a man be a farmer and a gentleman?"

Then the fury died out of her eyes, and she sank down again to her old position.

"Yes, it is Philip—noble Philip," with a loving intonation of the name, "and he loves me; but I am bound by my promise."

In the room in which we were was a deep recess, curtained away from the rest of the apartment by heavy damask draperies. Just then the curtains parted, and Philip sprang out. He darted to my side and raised my darling up in his strong arms.

"Ah, Grace, my own, I can carry on this cruel farce no longer. I, whom you have called Philip Port, am Philip Leith, and you are my promised bride."

My darling's dark eyes dilated as they looked up into his face for a moment, and the white lids closed.

It was the best thing that could have happened. I called Mrs. Rogers, and she comprehended things at a glance, and in our anxious ministrations to Grace we all became our natural selves again.

When Grace came to, everything was explained.

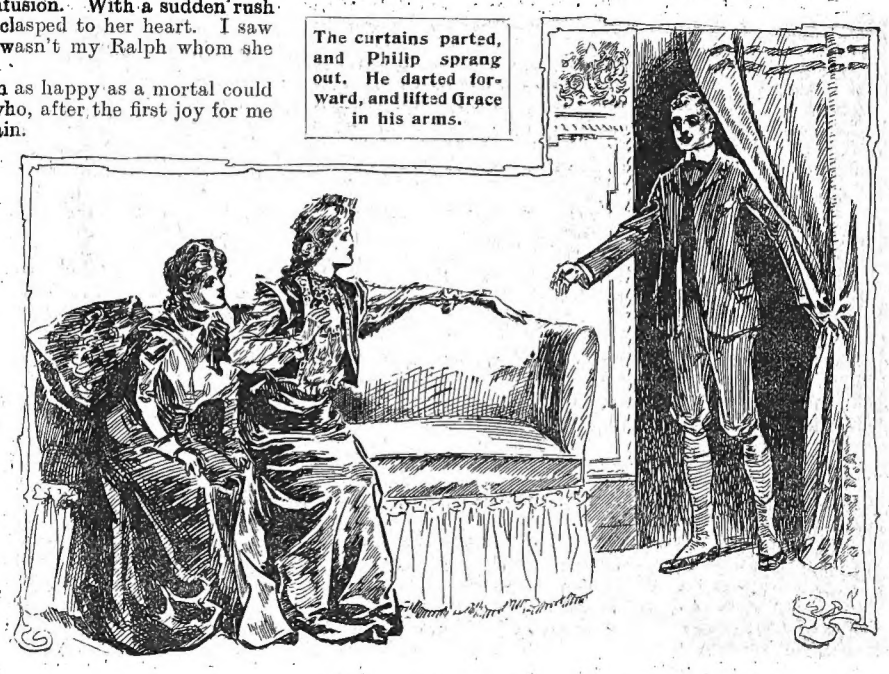
It was a plot arranged between Philip and Mrs. Rogers.

He did not wish to marry without love, and her invitation to us and the sudden call away were all a deep-laid conspiracy to bring the two together more effectually.

How it succeeded has been seen, and all I have to tell is that that wonderful summer in the country ended in two weddings, and four young people emerged from the rose-spectacled land of courtship into the broad sunshine of wedded bliss.

Philip and Grace built a beautiful home near us, and we are as inseparable as ever.

Lucy Jennings.



The curtains parted, and Philip sprang out. He darted forward, and lifted Grace in his arms.

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A Game of Cross . . . . Purposes.

Telling of a Man's First and Only Love.

It is the old story I am about to tell; that story to which, thank Heaven! people never tire of listening, any more than we do of seeing the buds swell, and the leaves unfolding, and the world made young again by the coming of Spring—the story, to which as we listen our youth comes back, and once more the flowers bloom, and the skies are blue, and our hearts are beating joyously, and it is May.

I am not young now; nor is the day on which I am soberly writing this little record of a long past period, a balmy one of Spring, or anything like it. And yet May comes freshly back to me as I recall that day of which I am going to speak.

A lark was singing far up in the blue sky, a few sheep were pasturing in the green distance, and a tall figure, dressed in grey, with a gun on its arm, and one or two dogs frisking round it, was coming leisurely along the sea-wall. I had been fully intent, but the minute before, upon the sketch of the old boat I was making; but now I felt nothing but the beating of my heart, and saw nothing but Mark Sutherland coming, with his dogs playing round him.

The little picture was never finished, for at the instant that I became conscious of the advancing figure, I dropped my brush, and hopelessly ruined my canvas by a great smear of Vandyke-brown. It was never finished, no—but I have it still.

He was a long way off when I first saw him, and yet it seemed almost the next instant that he was standing beside me, speaking. My heart had not left off beating, and I could feel the colour hot in my face as I looked up, but my fiery little terrier took exception to his dogs, and flew at them with tumultuous disapproval, taking his attention off me for the moment.

When this little fracas was quieted, he put down his gun on the bank, made his retrievers lie beside it, and sat down himself by me.

"Have you had good sport?" I asked, by way of saying something—anything.

"No," he answered; "but I can't complain; I didn't expect any. I came out here because I thought I should see you, and I wanted to tell you a piece of news, and ask you a question."

"News is a precious commodity, indeed, in these wilds; but please remember my Scottish blood, in expecting an answer to the question."

He did not seem to be attending to what I said; he had taken up one of my brushes and was absently playing with it, but he threw it down the next minute, and said softly:

"Hester, I have got an appointment that I have been trying for, and I shall leave for Australia next month—there's my news."

My heart that had been beating so wildly seemed to stand suddenly still, and drop down—down. The water and the green marsh rocked, blended hazily into each other and the sky; and then a voice that sounded dim and far off, but was my own, too, said: "It is good news, I suppose."

"Good news! Well, yes, I hope so."

He stopped a minute here. His voice was a very deep one, for he was a big, full-chested man; but when he spoke again it had a soft undertone in it, that used to ring in my ears afterwards—it does now.

"I thought it good news this morning, for without it I could not think of a wife. That troubled me little enough till lately—till, ah! till I knew you, Hester. My dear, I think you have guessed my question."

Guessed it! Ah! yes. But my face was down upon my hands; he could not hear the cry that was stifling in my heart, and he went on gently, pitilessly:

"But I shall not get an answer to it. Well, then, Hester, will you marry me? Will you go with me to Australia?"

I did not answer—I could not. Ah! those who have had deliberately to kill their own happiness, to raise up themselves the barrier that shuts them out from hope, and love, and life, will know how hard it is—will pity me.

"Will you be my wife, and go with me to Australia?"

"I cannot." And no wonder he made a sudden movement of surprise, for I, myself, wondered to hear the hoarse passion of my own voice.

"You cannot! What a fool I have been, then. I thought—I hoped—Hester, is it possible that you have not known what I have been thinking of all this time?"

Known what he had been thinking about? Ah! the life, and light, and joy of those moments when I had dared to hope that I did. Ah! the anguish of feeling now that they had all been in vain!

"Look at me, Hester. I don't think I understand you, my dear," he said patiently and gently. "You say you cannot be my wife, and yet—tell me you cannot love me, and I am answered at once."

He put his arm over my shoulder as I leant forward, with my face buried in my lap, and whispered:

"I think you love me, Hester."

"Oh, I do, Mark, I do!" I cried, lifting my head; "but I cannot marry you—I shall have to give you up."

"Give me up, my dear love!" and he held me closer.

"I cannot go to Australia."

"Why not?" And he looked half-amazed, half-amused.

I could not bear the glance of his kind, dark eyes. I shrank away from his arm, and said:

"I canno' leave Milly."

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To my own thinking, I had pronounced our doom now; but Mark Sutherland only laughed, and said:

"Well, then, you shall not; Miss Milly shall go, too."

"Ah! if that could only be; but Milly would die in Australia. We came back to England from Australia because the climate was killing her."

"And you will not leave her?"

"I promised mamma, before she died, that I never would; that if I married it should not separate us; that my home should be Milly's till she did not need it," I answered, faltering under something in the look of his face that was new to me. Up to this time I had been thinking of myself; now I was reminded that I was giving pain to him.

He was silent two or three minutes, looking away into the distance. He had taken his hand from my shoulder.

"Well, Hester," said he presently, gravely, not unkindly—but, ah! as it seemed to me, very coldly, "you have simply to choose between your sister and myself. You are the best judge of your sister's claims upon you; of my own, I will only say that I love you. I never thought nor cared much about women till I saw you, so I am not likely to change my liking or to forget it, and if you had married me—but I will not try and plead my cause against your sister's. It is for you to decide, and for me to abide by your decision."

I looked desperately up to the smiling, blue heavens, at the calm stream flowing on its tranquil path to the sea, and prayed, with a prayer so passionate that it seemed like a loud demand, that I might not be forced into slaying with my own hands the young happiness of my life.

"I cannot and will not do it," I said in my heart; yet, knowing the while that I could, and must

Then Mark spoke again.

"Would you like a little time to consider the matter? I need not leave the Hollies till to-morrow evening, or, perhaps, the next day."

"No," I answered—with or without my own will, I never knew. "I know what I must do. I cannot leave Milly."

"And Milly cannot go. That decides it, then. Well, I have nothing to say; I am the last man in the world to try to persuade anyone against his judgment." He rose deliberately, but did not go, for I sat still. "Are you going home?" he asked, after a minute. "Hester, don't look so sad; you are feeling for me—don't do that. I should like to think of you when I am over the seas, as happy as I would have tried to have made you. Think of me sometimes as a friend. I don't expect to forget you, Hester. Good-bye."

His hand, as he held it out, shook over so slightly, but it held mine in a firm pressure for an instant. Then he let it drop, stooped and picked up his gun, whistled his dogs round him, and strode away again without once turning to look back.

Milly and I were orphans. Our father and mother had both died in Australia, and we were sent home to the care of our sole relation, my father's only sister, an elderly maiden lady, living in a kind of lady-like poverty at a dull little village in Hampshire. Aunt Maggie died when I was seventeen and Milly twelve, leaving to us the little cottage that had been her home and ours, with everything it contained; no very valuable bequest, but all the poor soul had to leave; and here Milly and I—not heiresses, no, but not destitute either—continued to live with the dear old servant, who had been our aunt's faithful friend and companion, and our own kind and affectionate nurse ever since, fatherless and motherless, we had returned from Australia.

There were not many people to visit at Wincham; the rector, the doctor, and the Sutherland family comprised them. I think we were most intimate at the Hollies; for the children there were Milly's contemporaries, and her sworn admirers and friends. I first saw Mark Sutherland at the Hollies; he was Mr. Sutherland's cousin, and I had heard of him often before I saw him. He had led a wild, adventurous kind of life, wandering all over the world for his simple pleasure, I suppose, since I never heard that he had any other object in doing so. I had formed my idea of him, to be sure; the reality was not in the least like it. No, quite otherwise; and yet, after the first five minutes, I would not have changed the real man for the ideal, for worlds.

Do not suppose that I speculated much upon Mark's character in these days; such as he was I loved him, dearly loved him; ah, he would never know how dearly, for had I not given him up?

As one in a dream I went home; as in a dream I crawled slowly up the steep, winding lawn to our cottage; saw Milly hanging on the garden-gate watching for me, come flying out on to the lawn to meet me, all her golden hair streaming straight out behind her, heard her call me, scold me for being late; my own voice answering her; saw and heard all the familiar sights and sounds of every-day life, as we do sometimes in dreams, all made strange and perplexing by some dreadful sense of pain and trouble.

"Hetty," said Milly, as we sat at tea, "you're not eating anything; you look pale and glum; you've sat out in the sun till it has made you ill. I shall not allow it to occur again, mind that."

It pleased Milly to play the elder sister, and I was always content that the little one should do what pleased her. She was my darling, the one thing that my solitary life gave me to love till I saw Mark; I had set up my idol long ago, but it was going to cost me dear.

I remember that the child was in more than usually high spirits on that evening, that she teased me to talk to her, sing to her, and finally flew up to bed in a childish fit of anger because I could do neither one nor the other.

At any other time I should have gone after her, coaxed and caressed her into good temper; but now, with a feeling of relief that she was gone, I sat at the window, staring out into the dark, scented night, and counted the cost of my sacrifice.

Long, long, I sat there; long after the moon had risen, had set, and the stars began to grow pale before that streak of grey light in the east.

I thought of Mark, of what I had done, of what I had given up, till I was nearly mad. I hope that I was mad, for when I stood up and closed the window before going up to my room, I had said to myself that I would write to Mark Sutherland when morning came, and tell him that I had chosen once more between the two I loved, and chosen differently. Therefore I hope that I was mad, but I went upstairs quite resolved and quiet; I undressed without even once glancing towards the bed where my little sister lay; I meant to lie down on my pillow without doing so; but oh! I could not say my prayers and yet leave Milly without the kiss I always gave her before I slept.

So I went up to the bed and looked down upon what had for years been my sole earthly treasure. The child looked pale in the cold, grey dawn; her golden hair was tossed wildly back from her face, and covered the pillow; and while I stood still and gazed, my madness dying away, my old self coming back, she stirred in her sleep; two great tears

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welled out from the closed eyes, and with a sob she murmured: "Hetty."

Then I knelt down in the grey dawning, and thanked God that my madness has passed, and prayed that as He had given me strength to make the sacrifice, so He would help me never to repent it.

I did not see Mark Sutherland again; but the next time Milly went up to the Hollies, she told me, on her return, "that he had left the Hollies, gone away to Australia, and was never coming back again." My heart echoed the words, but I drew Milly to me and kissed her, and tried to be patient and to forget.

I could not forget; my nature was tenacious of what it had once taken hold upon, and the course of our lives was too uniform and monotonous to permit change and variety to have their usual influence. I scarcely knew, after Mark went away, how the days and years glided by, their course was so unmarked, and everything seemed so unchanged. At first I used to shrink and shiver at the chance mention of Mark Sutherland's name at the Hollies; that passed, and I pined to hear of him with a weary, anxious longing seldom satisfied.

They ceased to speak of him after a while, as people do of a long absent friend, and by degrees it seemed as if he were only remembered in one poor woman's heart, who almost came to think of him, too, as if he had been removed by death. So that, when one day Milly came back from the Hollies, and said, as she untied her hat and threw it down: "Hester, guess; who in the world do you think came to the Hollies last night?" not even my thoughts suggested the right person.

"No, no," said Milly, as I named one or two; "no; who but that cousin Mark who went away to Australia years ago! I was a mere child at the time, but I remembered him instantly—a compliment he did not return, by-the-way; though when he heard who I was, he asked after you."

Years ago, was it, since Mark went away? No! as Milly spoke, it seemed only yesterday; the joy, the sorrow, the old pain, so freshly new, were throbbing so wildly once more at my heart. He had not quite forgotten me then; but did he remember me as I remembered him?

"I do believe you have forgotten all about him," Milly went on; "and, let me tell you, I wonder at that, for I remember he used to seem fond of talking to you, Hetty. and he is a kind of man that women may be proud of attracting, none the less because he cares very little, I should say, for women in general."

"Really, Milly, dear, you seem to have studied Mr. Sutherland very closely, considering this may be called your first acquaintance with him."

She laughed, blushed, and threw back her beautiful golden hair.

"No, I don't know that I have; he devoted himself to me a good deal this evening, and I couldn't help forming my opinion, you know. There is to be a croquet-party to-morrow at the Hollies, and Mr. Sutherland made me promise to come up, and to bring you, if you would come; but I told him beforehand that I knew you would not, knowing your dislike to that delectable means for the promotion of flirting."

And after this it happened that Milly went nearly every day up to the Hollies; while I, who had long ago ceased to care for any companionship beside my sister's, sat at home longing with a feverish longing to see Mark Sutherland once more, and yet dreading, with a sickening dread, to meet the careless, estranged glance of the dark eyes that had looked into mine once, full of love.

It seemed that Mark not infrequently accompanied Milly part of the way home, but he never came near enough to our cottage for me to catch even the most distant glimpse of him, and my little sister had somehow ceased to talk of him after the first. So, though I still knew he stayed at the Hollies, he might almost have been across the wide ocean, as far as I was concerned. And yet—oh, no!—the sense of his presence seemed borne to me upon every breath of the sweet summer air that floated into my room. I could not sleep at night, nor rest calmly by day; and often, while Milly was with her friends, I used to wander out, scarce heeding where I went, impatient only of rest.

One day, when this terrible yearning was strong upon me, I took my sketching materials from force of habit, and set out to walk to a pretty wood some distance away.

The cool, green fragrance of the leafy shadows was grateful after the glaring sunshine, and I sat down to rest where it felt coolest. But a sudden sound of laughter and merry voices close at hand startled me, and not waiting to see who the speakers were, I got up and fled swiftly down the darkest and most tangled of the paths that branched away into the heart of the wood.

I soon left the merry voices far behind me, and, slackening my walk, I wandered on, dreamy and absorbed as ever till, suddenly turning into another path, I saw what caused me to stand still and forget everything but what my eyes looked upon. Mark Sutherland! Yes, Mark, older, darker, thinner, but Mark himself. Ah, how the picture of a day that had passed, all floated before me as I saw the downward bend of his stately head to look into the face beside him—the face that looked up again into his with those candid eyes, and a smile on the soft, parted lips.

The smile seemed to reflect itself upon Mark's grave face for an instant, and then he took up a little hand lying on his arm, and kissed it tenderly.

I looked no longer. I crept away; stricken with a dumb anguish, a dreadful, sullen despair, I crept away and went home. For I knew the candid blue eyes, and the sweet smile, and the floating golden hair; and they were my sister Milly's.

Oh! Had I not done enough? Had I not sacrificed enough? Was my cup not yet so full but that this bitter drop must be added to its overflow?

So I cried in my anguish, and it was long before better thoughts came to me, or that, coming, I could hold them firmly and take comfort. But by-and-bye I rose up from where I had flung myself down, and sat by the window to watch for Milly. She came along presently in the quiet evening light, and I looked at her with eyes freshly opened. I had never yet ceased to think of her as a child; I realised in one minute now that the child was a woman. I looked at the beautiful, fresh, young face, and involuntarily glanced at the reflection of my own in the mirror opposite. I never could have been in my best days what Milly was; and now—I turned away with a sigh from the image of that faded woman, with pale lips and weary, dark eyes.

Milly came in the next instant, threw off her hat, and, coming up beside me, took my face between her two soft hands, looked into it tenderly for a minute, then kissed me, and sat down with her arms round me.

"Hetty, my dear, I have something to tell you," she began, with a strange tremble in her voice, though she was smiling, too; "a wonderful thing. I don't think you would ever guess it, or I should say 'Guess'!"

"And what if I am cleverer than you give me credit for, and do guess it, Milly, dear?" I asked, pressing the little one close to my throbbing heart.

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"You never could; and yet—how your heart is beating!" she said, looking up at me timidly—"I believe you really know." Then, sinking her face down to my shoulder once more, she added, almost in a whisper: "Hester, he told me to ask you whether you would see him to-morrow?"

"'He' means Mr. Sutherland, of course!"

"Of course, Hester; do you mean to say yes?" asked Milly, stealing another of those timid glances at me.

"My 'yes' will go with yours, Milly, dear."

"God bless you, Hester!—my darling, my dear, dear sister," cried Milly fervently; and for a long while we were both silent. Nor, indeed, did she mention Mr. Sutherland's name again, nor return in any way to the subject, till about the middle of the next day, when she suddenly sprang up from her place by the window, and, glancing at me with a vivid blush and smile, ran out of the room, and I heard her fly upstairs.

Then I knew who was coming, and I sat still, because to move would have been out of my power. So, when he entered the room, I sat, and though I held out my hand and tried to utter a greeting, I knew that my lips only murmured inarticulately. He looked at me as he held my hand in a momentary grasp, and I thought there were both pain and a shocked surprise in his face—then he began:

"I have not come unexpectedly, I hope? Milly promised to ask you—to tell you——"

"She did tell me; I expected you," I strove to say, and, I hope, said it quietly.

"Did you guess why I wanted to see you?" he asked, with that directness of speech I remembered so well.

"Yes, I even went so far as that," I answered, and smiled. Oh! what a wintry smile, if it did not belie my heart.

"Of course, I could only have one purpose in asking to see you again," he went on quickly—"but, ah! Hester, what will you say to me this time?"

"What does Milly say?"

"Milly, always Milly still! But, Hester, it is for you to answer me first," he said; and abruptly walking from his position on the hearth, he came and sat down by me.

"Hester—I must call you so—did your sister tell you what I said to her yesterday?"

"She let me infer it."

"Infer—how absurd. Nothing like plain speaking to express a plain meaning," he broke out, rather impetuously. "But you are so cold and unlike your old self, Hester, that I could almost take it for an answer to what I came to ask. Did Milly tell you that yesterday—for I have grown to love the little girl dearly—Hester! Hester! What have I said? What is the matter?"

I hated, despised myself for the weakness, but the mortal struggle of yesterday was not done yet. I could not hear this man, whom I had loved so long, so deeply, avow to my face his transferred affection to my sister, and be unmoved. Involuntarily I grasped the arm of my chair for support, for my very life seemed fading from me in the struggle. He bent over me, he lifted my faint head on to his broad breast, but I shrank from him feebly.

"It is nothing. I am often faint. I am quite well again. You were saying—yes, go on, Mr. Sutherland."

"I was saying—ah! Hester—I think I need not go on—you are so changed, my dear," he said, looking down at me with sorrowful perplexity. "Well, well, Milly led me on to hope; but I ought to have known better. You never cared for me in the beginning, as I did for you."

"Surely, surely, that bygone ought to be a bygone now!" I cried out bitterly.

"If you say that, it ought indeed," he answered, turning from me; "but I told you then, Hester, that I should never forget you; and from something Milly said, and your remaining unmarried, I was wild enough to dream—to hope——".

Something—a light that dazzled my poor eyes—was breaking in upon me as he spoke.

"Mark!" said I, "what did you come here to-day to ask me?"

"The same question that I asked eight years ago, Hester. I have done with Australia; I am no longer a poor man, and I want the woman I always loved. Hester, is this really true? Is she to be mine at last?"

For a long, long time, I think, after this, we forgot the existence of anyone else beside ourselves. Then I told Mark the little game of cross-purposes we had been playing. His incredulous wonder that I could imagine he had ever thought of anyone but me, touched me to the heart.

"Poor Milly," he said; "so you would have put her off with the reversion of a heart. No, when she marries, may she be what you are, Hester—her husband's 'first love and his last.'"

Hilda Campbell.

A STATEMENT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO YOU IS MADE ON PAGE 751.

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SWEETHEART.

Telling How a Scoundrel Received His Deserts.

"SWEETHEART!"

There was no reply. Burly, broad-shouldered John Percival turned to his newly-wedded second wife with a smile.

"We are a little early," he said, "and she is probably smartening herself up for your benefit, dear."

Mrs. Percival smiled in return. She was a pretty, bright-faced girl of little more than twenty with whom John Percival had fallen in love, and whom he had, in his sturdy, impressive fashion, wooed, proposed to, married, and all in six weeks. The deed was characteristic of the man. Yorkshire to the backbone, though a Londoner by choice of residence, he did not hold with hesitation. So when he met Helen Meredith he said to himself: "That is my future wife," and perhaps his bluff and yet courtly persistence somewhat precipitated matters. He would not take "No" for an answer, and Helen, perforce, dominated by his stronger will, said "Yes" almost before she had made up her mind. So they were married.

"Sweetheart!" cried John Percival again.

"Coming, daddy dear!" was the reply, and down the stairs of The Grange came a girl who to Helen Percival seemed a vision of beauty. She felt she had never seen so lovely a child. And yet "Sweetheart" was eighteen. A slim, slender form, a perfect face, set in a cloud of golden hair, two pretty hands held out in welcome to the newcomer, and yet withal a queenly dignity of carriage that added a charm to the picture.

Helen Percival ran to the foot of the staircase and clasped the hands held out to her.

"You lovely child!" she exclaimed. John Percival gave a big sigh of relief. He had been wondering how "Sweetheart" would accept her new mother. One glance at her face dispelled all his doubts and fears in an instant. Helen Percival was pressing her lips to the rosy cheek, flushed with happiness and anticipation.

"You pretty child!" she murmured. "I had been afraid of meeting you, dear. How foolish of me! Why, we are more like sisters. And yet you are so little and dainty. You are like a bit of Dresden china."

Sweetheart laughed—such a musical ripple of merriment.

"Oh, mother!" was all she said. But the words and the tone brought the tears to Helen Percival's eyes.

"Daddy! She is so pretty, she made me nearly forget you!" And in another moment Sweetheart was clasped in John Percival's arms, clinging to him, kissing his cheeks, his brown beard, his resolute mouth in an ecstasy of gladness.

"Oh, Daddy, how could I?" she said, with a half-tearful smile at her new mother. It was a happier homecoming than any one of the three had dreamt of.

* * * * * * *

Sweetheart's mother had died when she was a year old, and her father had remained a widower for seventeen years. To tell the truth, he had never once met with anyone to put in his dead wife's place until Fate brought him Helen Meredith. Without even consulting the daughter, who was the light of his life, he married Helen Meredith. And his heart beat with an unspeakable joy when he found that his daughter and his newly-wedded wife were attractive to each other. He had, of course, written to Sweetheart to tell her of his marriage, but circumstances had prevented any previous introduction. John Percival met Helen Meredith abroad, his business would not allow of his return home even for a couple of days until its conclusion. Hence the strange meeting.

But John Percival was content. His beloved daughter and his beautiful second wife, the two dearest in the world to him, were friends.

During the next month even more could be said. Sweetheart and her new mother were almost inseparable. The former honestly loved Helen, and the latter both loved and admired her new daughter.

"I can't understand you not ever having had a lover," said Sweetheart's mother one day.

"But ——," began Sweetheart, and then she paused with a blush that made her look prettier than ever. The touch of colour did not go unobserved by Helen. She had been desirous, eager even, of winning her daughter's confidence as she had won her love—that was assured, and this was an opening.

"Ah!" said Helen Percival, gently, "then there is someone?"

"Mother, I dare not tell you," cried Sweetheart. "Oh, it is all so like a dream!"

The girl, though but a few years younger than the woman to whom she spoke, dropped on her knees beside her, and hid her cheeks in the shelter of the ready arms that crept about her slight form.

"Sweetheart, dear, tell me when you will. I shall not play the part of stepmother-dragoness, I promise you faithfully, if he is worthy of you."

Sweetheart clung to her even yet more closely and tenderly.

"I think," she said, with tears in her voice, "you must be my own mother come back to earth, only much younger!"

Helen Percival's heart beat with affection for the girl who spoke to her so lovingly. To be loved was to her a new, strange thing. Her own childhood had been spent among strangers, and had been loveless, almost comfortless. And now she had dropped from those clouds—the dingy surroundings of a cheerless garrison town in Kent—into this dear sunshine—a husband's devotion and a daughter's love, and the confidence she knew would come.

She laid her arms yet more closely round Sweetheart, and kissed her upturned mouth.

"Tell me when you like, dearie," she said softly. "I only want you to feel you can trust me."

Sweetheart's only reply was a long sigh of content.

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The new Mrs. Percival soon became very popular in Westhampton circles. And this was all the more strange, because Westhampton was rather apt to look askance upon a newcomer into their midst to whom they had not been properly

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introduced, and who had not entered their "social pale" without first having given evidence of the very highest credentials. This is the way of some small country towns; but in the case of Westhampton Helen Percival carried all before her. Before they met her, Westhampton "society" thought "Who is she?" After it was "How charming she is," and John Percival noted with deep pride the success his pretty wife was making, and his heart filled with honest devotion to her. But the sweetest thing in his life was the thought that his daughter and his wife were so closely linked.

"I have two sweethearts now," he went on to say, with a big, cheery laugh.

"Wait until Captain Dale comes back!" one day said a mutual friend at whose house John Percival had called in order to accompany his wife and daughter home.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Drew?" questioned Helen Percival. But a glance was sufficient to show her a certain tell-tale colour on Sweetheart's face, and she said no more.

"Wait and see, Mrs. Percival," said her hostess, with a smile at Sweetheart.

"Captain Dale is a very good fellow," exclaimed John Percival stoutly. Sweetheart glanced shyly at her father, and Helen, watching her, guessed. This Captain Dale was the "someone."

"He is coming back next week," pursued Mrs. Drew; "and without doubt will call on you, dear Mrs. Percival."

There was a hidden meaning in this remark which Helen Percival was ready to notice.

"If he is a friend of my husband's, he will be most welcome," she said. And Mrs. Drew felt somehow that she had been snubbed, though how she could not have said for the life of her. But Helen Percival was, to use rather a common phrase, "taken aback"; she had spoken in haste, with a strange whirl of memories throbbing in her brain. The name Dale was so familiar. And Captain Dale, too! She was not sorry when it was time to go home. Could there be two of them?

"Who is this Captain Dale?" she asked her husband later on. John Percival laughed.

"Oh, a good sort!" he said; "has been a bit rackety, like most soldiers, but will settle down when he's once married and done for. He's very much in love with Sweetheart, and——"

"And you like him?" questioned Helen.

"Yes, I do," answered bluff John; "though he's not the sort of man I should have thought our Sweetheart would have been attracted by. All heart and no——"

But he broke off short here. Helen Percival had sunk into a chair, half fainting. Captain Dale was forgotten in a moment. John rang the bell for Helen's maid, fussed over Helen, until he made her worse, and finally left her lying down in her own room, with Sweetheart in attendance, and went into his own den to smoke.

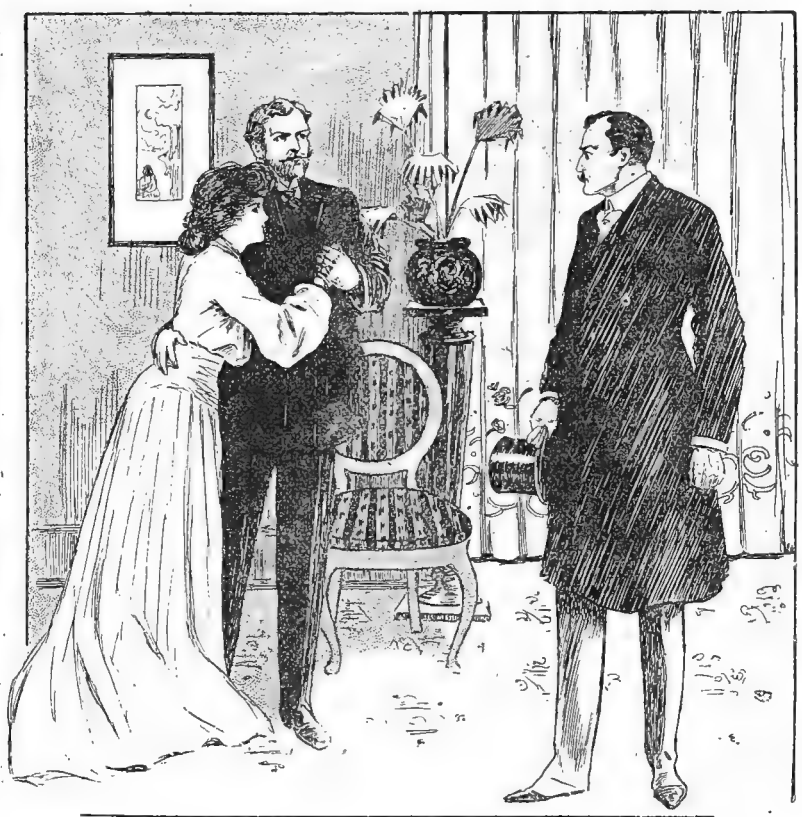
"It is the same man—it is the same man!"

So ran Helen Percival's thoughts, and when she questioned Sweetheart a little she knew she was right. There was but one Captain Dale.

"And you care for him?"

"Indeed I do, mother," was Sweetheart's reply. But she could not understand why Helen sighed.

"I shall be so glad to see him," she murmured. "Now go, Sweetheart. I am better now and I am going to lie down for an hour and sleep."



Helen Percival turned to her husband, whose arms were about her waist in a moment.

Sweetheart kissed her stepmother tenderly and went. But sleep would not be wooed. That same strange phrase kept Helen Percival awake.

"It is the same man—the same man!"

* * * * * * *

It was then that Helen Percival made her great mistake. If she had only told her husband all, it would have saved the three people much pain and heartache. But after long deliberation she resolved to wait, and trust to chance. And when, some ten days later, she came face to face with Captain Dale, she knew she had done wrong. But then it was too late.

She took his hand in hers without the least sign of recognition of him, and, in the usual polite phrases, made him welcome. It would be very hard to say which was the greater, her perplexity or his astonishment. But he took the cue from her, and was quick enough to assume an imperturbability which he was very far from feeling. Sweetheart noticed nothing. It was her mother's "at home" day and there were many other visitors to be talked to.

"I must see you alone," said Horace Dale, in a whisper, looking round him cautiously.

"There is not the least necessity."

Helen Percival drew herself up proudly.

"But——"

"Excuse me, but I see my husband beckoning me!" And Helen moved away with a bow.

Captain Dale looked after her with an unpleasant expression on his usually handsome face.

"I wonder if she has told. If she has, it will spoil everything. She will set the girl against me, and I shall lose old Percival's money."

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And Captain Horace Dale muttered a not very polite expletive between his teeth.

"What's wrong?" inquired a voice by his side.

"Hullo, Vernon."

"Just come in. I hear Mrs. Percival is——"

"Yes, very pretty, but not my style," said Captain Dale; and turned on his heel. Frank Vernon stared at him for a moment, and then broke into a quiet laugh.

"I always knew you were a cad, Dale," he said to himself, "and not fit to black Miss Percival's shoes; and now I think so more than ever, and she loves him; won't throw a word at me, and I worship the very ground she walks on. This is a miserable world!"

Poor Frank Vernon! Until Captain Dale had come along, Sweetheart Percival had smiled on him, accepted his roses and violets, and had lifted him into the seventh heaven of delight by preferring him to all her other admirers, and Frank had simply fallen headlong in love with her fresh, sweet beauty, and had flattered himself that one day he might—— Then came Horace Dale, and all in a moment every castle Frank had built was shattered. Poor Frank!

"Confound him!" he muttered; "he's so good-looking—no wonder she prefers him to a plain, ordinary outsider like me!"

* * * * *

That afternoon was a sort of dream to Helen Percival. She scarcely knew how she got through it. To meet Horace Dale again, like this; the man she had once been engaged to. How bitterly she regretted not having told her husband! And now the man she had been affianced to was in love with her own step-daughter!

Captain Horace Dale was scarcely more happy.

"Will she tell?" he kept thinking. But it was not of the engagement he was thinking, but of the reason why Helen Meredith had broken it off. And when he thought of this, Horace Dale felt like going into a rage of fury and desperation.

"I must see her, and find out what she means to do. If she tells all, it means ruin for me, and—Sweetheart will——"

In vain he stamped up and down his room, trying to think what to do. He did not know what Helen meant to do or say! And to add to his misery, which, let me say, he fully deserved, he went down to his club one night, and, in a reckless mood, lost considerably more than he was able to pay at baccarat. The money he contrived to raise the next day, somehow, but it did not increase his good temper to have to pay it. He reviled his ill-luck, and tried to forget. But he could not.

And Sweetheart? She, too, was unhappy. Helen did not like her lover, and would not talk to her about his perfections, his charming manner and his handsome face. There had come a cloud between Sweetheart and her "mother," and Horace Dale had brought it. And the cloud grew and grew until even John Percival noticed it. He, little dreaming of the cause, bantered both in his bluff way, until one day Sweetheart ran off to her own room in tears, and so astonished him, that he felt almost angry with Helen. And thence grew a certain restraint between husband and wife, which made the former uncomfortable, and the latter very unhappy. And Captain Horace Dale was to blame for it all.

But Nemesis was only waiting. Her opportunity came when Captain Dale's did. He had striven to gain a few minutes alone with Helen Percival in order to find out her intentions. Did she mean to betray him? Fate gave him this opportunity in due course. He called one afternoon, and found Helen alone.

"I have been waiting for this," he said, after the usual formal greeting. "What do you intend to do, Helen?"

"My name is Mrs. Percival, if you please, Captain Dale," replied Helen, with ever so slight an accent upon Horace Dale's title. He winced—because he knew what it meant.

"Is it to be war or peace between us?" he went on. "No, do not speak for a moment. Hear me first!"

Helen sat down with a face as expressionless as that of a statue of stone.

"What do you intend to do? You know how I love Sweetheart; and I think she cares for me. Do you mean to come between us or not? If the former, then I shall know what to do. If the latter, I can return you something you might not care for your husband to see."

Helen Percival half rose from her seat.

"What is that?" she demanded.

"I thought," cried Horace Dale, "that I had something interesting to tell you when we were alone. Don't you remember certain letters written by you to me, long ago?"

"Schoolgirl epistles like those!"

"And," said Horace Dale, "all undated!"

"And I thought you were a man of honour when I wrote them. I thought I loved you."

"Yes, and you threw me over!"

"You know why"—coldly.

"Yes, but your husband won't when he reads them. He will believe that it was because he was a richer man than I was."

Helen Percival drew herself up to her full height.

"Tell him," she exclaimed, "and I will tell him what and who you are, Captain Dale." Again the accent made him wince, but he hid it with a forced laugh.

"Well, is it war or peace? Help me to win Sweetheart, and I return you these." He took a packet of letters from his breast as he spoke. "Set her against me, and I hand these to your husband."

"Who prefers to take them on the spot, please!" said a deep voice.

John Percival stood in the doorway.

"I have only heard the last few words of this most interesting interview. Will you kindly explain matters to me a little more fully?"

Helen Percival turned to her husband, whose arm was about her waist in a moment.

"Now, then, sir; will you speak first, or shall my wife?" Then Horace Dale knew that he had played and lost. He opened his mouth to speak but the words refused to come.

"Let me speak, John," implored Helen Percival; "oh, if only I had told you long ago! When I was a girl of sixteen, this man fascinated me. I thought him a hero, a man of honour. I wrote him foolish letters, the love letters of a silly girl."

"Go on."

"He threatens that unless I aid him in his wooing of Sweetheart, to show the letters to you. I was engaged to him, when quite by chance I found out what he really was, a gambler and a cheat. How could I dare to help his suit with Sweetheart, knowing this?"

"It is not true!" said Dale.

"It is the truth! Look at him. He dare not deny that he was turned out of his regiment for cheating at cards. He was compelled by his colonel to send in his resignation."

"Oh!"

It was a strange cry, the wail of a wounded animal, and it came from the anteroom.

John Percival turned and threw back the curtains. Sweetheart Percival lay, like a stricken thing, upon the floor, with her curly head buried in the cushions of an armchair.

Helen slipped out of her husband's arms, and ran to her, drew her to her arms, and held her like a child to her bosom. With womanly instinct she divined what had happened. Sweetheart had overheard all the truth.

John Percival let the curtain fall to hide the scene. Then he turned to Horace Dale.

"Do you see that, you cur?" he said, in a tense whisper; "that's your handiwork! Are you not proud of it? Now give me those letters and go."

The ex-captain handed him the packet.

"Now go, and never let me set eyes on your face again! Proof!—I want no proof of your villainy. I can see it in your face."

And Horace Dale went—for ever. Strange to say, he met Frank Vernon on the doorstep as he left the house, a circumstance which, when he heard of a certain event long after—which he did by glancing at an English paper in a distant land—seemed almost prophetic

Clifton Bingham

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GOOD FOR EVIL.

Telling of a Secret Marriage and of the Events That Followed.

"Be my wife, Norma; do not let us wait on and on for ever, with no hope of your aunt's consent. She has no legal right to control you anyway, as you are twenty-one. Let us go over to the next town and be quietly married. I have a special license. For my uncle has sent for me to come to him; and as he is all alone in the world, I cannot refuse to remain with him for the last few months—it may be even less—that he will be spared. But I shrink from going away, Norma, and leaving you al one to the tender mercies of Mrs. Kavanagh. She is your dead father's only sister, but she treats you as she would not dare to treat a servant. Marry me, Norma, and, come what may, at least your bondage will be ended."

Richard Travers stooped and kissed the pale cheek of the fair, blue-eyed girl at his side.

She tried to smile, but the sweet lips would not be forced into such an exhibition, and instead she broke down and sobbed upon his breast.

"Oh, Dick! Dick! How can I let you go?" she cried. "For you are all the sunshine in my life! Aunt Emma is a real tyrant over me, and Lena is worse. And, Dick, I am afraid—I suspect that Lena likes you a little!"

His handsome face flushed, but he laughed lightly. Ah, Richard Travers knew more than he chose to tell! For Lena Kavanagh had acknowledged her affection for him only the night before, and he had told her gently but firmly that he did not care for her; that there was but one woman in this world for whom he cared, and that was her cousin, Norma Andrews.

And Dick had not forgotten the baleful look in Lena's big black eyes as he made this imprudent confession.

Perhaps this was secretly the real reason why he urged Norma to marry him before he went away, though they must keep the marriage a secret until he should return to claim her.

It was not a difficult task to convince Norma, and at last she gave him he promise. The next day he obtained permission to take Norma out for a drive, and they drove to a neighbouring town, where a clergyman Dick knew was awaiting them to perform the ceremony.

And so, when Dick Travers drove back to the old Kavanagh house, it was his wife who sat at his side in the trap—his own little wife!

He kissed the sweet red lips as he lifted her from the vehicle.

"God bless my wife!" he whispered softly.

Nobody suspected what had taken place.

Dick left the following day for a neighbouring city to remain with his dying relative, a rich old bachelor.

Hardly a week had elapsed, when Mrs. Kavanagh pompously announced that old Travers had expressed a desire to see Lena once more before he died. The Kavanaghs and the Travers were remotely connected by marriage.

"I shall send her over at once," said Lena's mother.

So Lena went, and the days drifted by and grew into weeks; still she did not return.

"Old Travers is getting better since Lena's arrival!" Mrs. Kavanagh exclaimed.

But one thing troubled poor Norma sorely. Letters from Dick Travers—her husband—had ceased to arrive, and although she wrote regularly, her letters failed to elicit a response. And none of the correspondence between them had contained the slightest reference to the secret mar.iage.

Norma would have had trouble in proving the fact, had she wished to do so, for Dick had taken possession of the certificate of marriage, and the clergyman who had performed the ceremony had gone away to parts unknown.

Time passed, and at last the blow fell upon poor Norma. One morning Mrs. Kavanagh received a letter from her daughter which seemed to cause her great satisfaction and delight.

"Well, Lena has done well," she cried, eagerly. "She has married Richard Travers, and, of course, all the Travers fortune will be hers now. It is true I do not fancy her marrying away from home, but under the circumstances I can forgive her anything! Lena is a dear girl, and beautiful, too," added the fond mother complacently, "and she deserves to do well. I shall go to visit her in a short time. She invites me cordially, and says I must forgive her for her hasty marriage. I am only too pleased to hear of her good fortune."

To Mrs. Kavanagh's surprise and disgust, Norma rose and left the room in silence. Mrs. Kavanagh tossed her head.

"Umph! Spiteful thing! She is jealous. But Norma Andrews was never like other girls. I am glad dear Lena is not like her in any way!"

Mrs. Kavanagh was somewhat startled when her niece made her appearance the next day and demanded money with which to take a short journey. Mrs. Kavanagh lifted her hands in horror.

"Where are you going? And what earthly business can you have running about the country all alone? Private business? You? I don't believe that you have any at all!"

"I am going, all the same, Aunt Emma," returned the clear, cold voice, "and you shall defray my travelling expenses. My father left money in your hands for me, and I know it."

Mrs. Kavanagh fell back, pale to the very lips, her eyes full of a wild terror, which convinced Norma that her random shot had told, and that it was as she had long suspected. She had not been left in Mrs. Kavanagh's care destitute.

"I merely ask enough of my own money to pay my own way to Dayton," the girl went on firmly.

"Dayton! In the name of goodness what takes you there?"

Norma's pale face grew a shade paler.

"That is my affair," she answered quietly.

So Norma set out on her dreary journey to Dayton—to her false husband.

"He could not marry Lena Kavanagh while I am his wife," the poor girl murmured as the train sped along.

She reached Dayton at last, and went straight to the handsome home of Dick Travers' uncle. Ringing the bell, she was shown into a drawing-room, into the presence of Lena and old Mr. Travers, who lay upon a sofa, and—yes, Dick Travers himself. He started to his feet with a cry of joy.

"Norma, my darling!" he cried, kissing her before the others. "What has been the matter? I have not heard a word from you for weeks, and I was half mad with anxiety, and was on the point of going back to you, but my uncle had another attack, and——"

"Dick, tell me what it all means?" she whispered. "Aunt Kavanagh says that Lena is married to—to——"

"Uncle Richard Travers. Yes, my darling," he added in an undertone. "She did that so that she might claim the Travers' fortune, and prevent you and me from inheriting it; and she did not know until just now, when Uncle Richard was telling her, that he had already made me his heir, and the fortune is mine and yours, my loved one."

Norma was speedily presented to the old man, and, save for Lena's sulkiness over the downfall of her mad scheme, all were contented and happy.

The old man did not long survive. His property reverted to his nephew, but Dick and Norma generously shared it with the Kavanaghs, although they did not deserve it.

"Evil for evil is beast-like, evil for good is demon-like, but good for evil is Christ-like."

E. Burke Collins.

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NURSE GRAY'S ORDEAL.

Relating how a Sinner was Saved.

"What do you think of the case, doctor?" asked Roger Cleveland, walking with short, quick strides about the room.

"It is serious—there is no disguising that, but not alarming," returned old Dr. Mallin gravely. "At least not yet," he corrected. "I must confess that this continuation of listlessness and irritability is not a reassuring symptom, but I fancy that we shall get over that. I am, however, of opinion that your wife should have a night nurse as well as a day nurse."

"You mean that she requires constant attention during the night as well as during the day; that it is not sufficient for the day nurse to sleep close at hand during the night?" asked Cleveland, with a swift glance at the medico.

"That is just it!" declared the doctor. "I find that Nurse Downes is being worn out; and, moreover, your wife appears occasionally to be worse in the morning. I attribute this last circumstance to the fact that the nurse is unable to wait on her as much as she ought to. No, I am confident that we must have another nurse, and I think I have exactly the one to suit the position!"

He was a well-meaning old gentleman, was Dr. Mallin; one of those diffident individuals who scarcely ever say a thing confidently, but introduce it by "I think." Yet he was a fairly clever man, and was looked up to in his profession.

Roger Cleveland stopped in his peregrinations across the carpet, and cast a sharp glance at the doctor, who, however, was staring at the carpet in thought. Cleveland swung on his heel and stared out of the window. There was a silence for nearly three minutes, when Dr. Mallin said: "I suppose you have no objection?"

"Objection?" echoed Cleveland with a start. "No, of course, I haven't!" he went on more composedly. "Please do anything and everything to restore dear Adela to health, and you will earn my eternal gratitude, Dr. Mallin! This long-drawn illness is making me a martyr to nerves! And you think that you have found a suitable nurse? Who is she? If I may speak plainly, doctor, I think that the present nurse is not so patient and forbearing as—she might be. And if you have to bring another into the house, it should be some meek creature——"

"I know, I know!" interrupted Dr. Mallin. "I think that the present nurse will do for daylight, and I can bring, I think, one of the sweetest creatures in the world to act as night nurse. I'll see to it at once, and, if possible, have her here to-night. Then we'll hope for better things!"

The medical gentleman took his leave a moment later, and, as soon as he had completed his round of visits, he sent a note to a nursing home; the letter was addressed to the matron, who, after perusing it, sent a message to Nurse Gray.

The nurse in question quickly reported herself in the matron's room. She was a young woman of three-and-twenty, with a slight, graceful figure, and a face that was grave for it's owner's years. It was not sad by any means, although there were traces of suffering; and those who knew Nurse Gray were aware that she could be very animated and mirthful. A superior woman, and one to be trusted, was the verdict of most people who came in contact with her.

"Lucy," said the matron, addressing her familiarly, "I have a note from Dr. Mallin; he wants a night attendant and asks me to send you if it is in any way possible. It is fortunate that I can spare you, for I always like to help old Dr. Mallin. It is to take charge of a sick woman, Mrs. Cleveland, and it may be a matter of some weeks. He wants you to take up the duties this evening; it is out Sydenham way."

"Very well," returned Nurse Gray, with a smile that transformed her grave countenance into a vision of loveliness. "Dr. Mallin is a good old gentleman, and I shall be pleased to go. I am glad that he shows such confidence in me!"

"That's right!" remarked the matron approvingly. "Let me see, you will——" And then they drifted into details which are of no interest to us.

The footman who opened the door to Dr. Mallin and Nurse Gray that evening told his fellow servants that the latter was the very ideal of a woman intended by Nature to help the sick and suffering; at least, that is what he meant, although he used different language. The doctor escorted his companion to the room adjoining that in which his patient lay, where she was introduced to the other attendant, and to Mr. Cleveland's housekeeper.

Dr. Mallin had some final instructions to give, and Lucy Gray had to be shown her room by the housekeeper, but in half-an-hour the two nurses were comparing notes, and Lucy was waiting to be introduced to Mrs. Cleveland before going on duty. The patient was asleep, and it was not wise that a new-comer should meet her gaze without preparation.

"I am afraid you will find her rather tiresome, dear!" observed Nurse Downes commiseratingly. "I have had a rare time of it, and I am thankful to get some relief. No, I can't say she is *very* ill, but she doesn't mend, and that is what is puzzling Dr. Mallin. I expect that he will want to consult another practitioner shortly. Mr. Cleveland is a nice man, and pays every attention to his wife."

"You look tired!" said Lucy Gray sympathetically. "I wish she would wake up, so that you could introduce me; then you could go to bed."

"Nurse!"

The voice came faintly from the adjoining room, and its tone was peevish. The call was followed by the tinkling of a small bell, which Nurse Gray rightly conjectured to be the signal usually employed by the invalid. The costumed attendants entered the room quietly.

"Oh, there you are!" said the invalid in the same irritable tone. "You sleep so soundly at night; I am sure I might die before you would hear!"

Nurse Downes soothed her skilfully, and then continued: "You will not have to call loudly again, for Dr. Mallin has engaged a night nurse, and she is here, waiting to see you. I am sure you will like her! Everyone does!"

Nurse Gray stepped silently forward, a compassionate smile on her lips

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"You must let me do that for you, Mrs. Cleveland," she said gently, stepping forward quickly as Downes was about to raise the pillow a little, and performing the task with the utmost gentleness. "That is better, isn't it?"

"I don't know!" was the reply, uttered in that grudging style common to invalids who recognise a fact but do not like to admit its truth. "Give me something to drink, nurse!"

Lucy Gray motioned to the day nurse to retire, which Downes did very willingly, and then she assumed the duties in the most matter-of-fact fashion. Mrs. Cleveland made no demur; she was already beginning to like Nurse Gray. Shortly afterwards, the invalid fell into another uneasy sleep and Lucy prepared to keep vigil through the long night.

Mrs. Cleveland awakened several times during the next two hours, but Nurse Gray soothed her; there was something so refreshing, so tranquillising, in Nurse Gray's presence and touch!

"I think I shall like you," observed Mrs. Cleveland, as she closed her eyes and tried to settle into a good sleep. This was just before midnight. "You are better than Nurse Downes!"

"I am sure I shall like waiting on you!" said Nurse Gray decisively. And indeed it was true, for Lucy had taken quite a fancy to this simple woman, whose nature she quickly judged to be confiding and gentle.

"I am sure that she must be a dear little wife to her husband!" thought Nurse Gray, gazing at her sleeping patient reflectively. "Illness has spoilt her temper temporarily, but I am convinced that she is a good, simple, loving creature. I wonder if Mr. Cleveland is in town? I have an idea that she will sleep well to-night, and that the rest of my watch will be peaceful!"

She seated herself once more and took up a book of poems; but her vigil was to be interrupted by a dramatic incident which she did not in the least suspect.

It was past midnight. Lucy Gray looked up as the door opened and a man stepped into the room.

"I am Mr. Cleveland," he said softly. "How is she? You are the new nurse?"

Lucy Gray had risen to answer the first question, but she let the book of poems fall to the floor as she drew back, half in surprise and half in fear, and uttered one word in a barely audible voice—

"Ray!"

Cleveland started as though he had been stung; he bent forward to scrutinise the nurse in the dim light, and then he cried:

"*You!* How do you come here?"

"I was engaged by Dr. Mallin. I did not know!" stammered Nurse Gray. "You have changed your name!"

"Yes!" he replied shortly. "It was a condition to the—the inheritance of property belonging to my wife. So we are thrown together again!"

Nurse Gray could not trust herself to speak for a few seconds, and in that brief space there flashed through her mind the main incidents of her life of four years ago. She had loved Ray Chester; he had wooed her, and had vowed that he loved her. She had been so happy! She had sometimes dreaded even the fulness of that happiness, which had seemed too great for her to hope to enjoy, and her forebodings had been realised. Ray had taken offence at—at nothing! She, Lucy Gray, could find no excuse for him, much as she loved him. He had forsaken her, and rumour had said that it was so that he could marry for money! She had been ill, and then she had lost trace of him; he had married and passed out of her ken.

She had tried to forget, and had devoted herself to nursing. And now she was face to face with the man who had forsaken her!

Lucy glanced up at him when her thoughts had brought her back to the present, and she saw a gleam of admiration in his eye. Nerving herself, she spoke calmly.

"Mr. Cleveland, your wife is sleeping quietly. In my professional capacity I must ask you to withdraw. We have buried the past!"

He shrank from her, retreated towards the door, and passed out of the room. Lucy tottered to the chair and sank into it with a choked sob.

The night was long for Nurse Gray, and when she was relieved in the morning, her companion in the task of watching Mrs. Cleveland remarked on her swollen and reddened eyes.

"Whatever is the matter?" asked Nurse Downes in astonishment.

"A frightful headache!" responded Lucy brokenly. "It is most unfortunate! I must lie down!"

She remained in bed till the evening, when she arose and had a short walk before going on duty again. She felt calm now; the effect of the tearing open of the old wound was passing away. She felt that she could meet Ray now without emotion, but she hoped that he would not come!

He did come, however. It was a custom which he intended to maintain while his wife was so ill; he could not rest unless he had just one look at her before retiring.

Lucy Gray recognised that she must suffer this nocturnal visit, but she could avoid him during the day. He came each night, and expressed his gratitude that Mrs. Cleveland had shown a slight improvement since Nurse Gray had assumed her duties. He was affectionate towards his wife on the one occasion, at midnight, when she awoke as he entered, and Lucy tried to explain and reconcile his vows to her of long

She saw Ray standing at the table, pouring some powder into the contents of the glass!

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ago, his glances of admiration for her now, and his conduct towards his wife, which was in every way indicative of affection.

Lucy Gray gradually lost her fear of meeting Cleveland; she felt sure of herself, and she ventured to take walks during the lovely afternoons in the spacious grounds of Palatia Villa, as Mrs. Cleveland had whimsically named her residence. It was nearly a fortnight since she had entered the house as nurse, and it was a gratification to her to know that the invalid was slowly shaking off the illness which had kept her so low for a length of time that puzzled the doctor.

She was humming gaily, looking at the flowers and drinking in the balmy air, when a shadow crossed her path and Ray Cleveland barred her further progress. It was not till that instant that she noticed whither she had strayed; they were in a secluded part of the garden farthest from the house.

"I would that I could be so happy!" he cried, with enforced calmness, that masked almost uncontrollable passion.

"I think that you can afford to be happy now, Mr. Cleveland, for your wife is making excellent progress and is practically out of danger!" replied Nurse Gray, with assumed ease.

"That will not bring me the happiness which I am seeking!" he cried vehemently, coming a step nearer to her. "I am bound to one who is no companion for me, whom I do not love!"

"Ray! Mr. Cleveland! Surely you do not mean that!" she cried, in horror. "Why did you marry her? Why do you show such affection? Is that all false?"

"Yes," he answered recklessly. "She is fond of me; would you have me break her heart? So I make pretence! I do——"

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried Lucy Gray piteously, wringing her hands in despair. "You must not tell me this! You must go to her. You married her and you must do your duty."

"Yes, I will try to do my duty," he answered fiercely. "Have I not shown you that I am doing it, even to the extent of acting a lie? I have never loved but one woman!" he added significantly, as he turned on his heel and left her.

On returning to the house, Nurse Gray learnt that Mrs. Cleveland was not so well; there had apparently been a slight relapse. She went to her own room to prepare for an earlier turn than usual, as it might be necessary to help Nurse Downes before her own turn actually came. This proved to be correct, and she was summoned to the sick room, where she found Dr. Mallin.

"Very strange," muttered the doctor, with a puzzled air. "Something has upset her, Nurse Gray," he continued, in a whisper; "she has been asking for you to come and take Nurse Downes' place, and she says it is not because of any dislike, but because she has something to say to you. I'm half afraid that her head is becoming seriously affected. The brain——"

And, at that point, the good doctor forgot that he was speaking to anyone and moved away, mumbling to himself in deep thought.

Nurse Downes, glad of a rest after a particularly tiring day, but feeling rather hurt at Mrs. Cleveland's leaning towards Nurse Gray, went off duty and Dr. Mallin soon afterwards left, on the understanding that he should be immediately summoned if required. Lucy tried to compose her patient; this agitation was most detrimental, and Dr. Mallin warned the nurse before he left that she must try her utmost to compose the invalid. He was afraid to administer a drug at that juncture.

"Nurse," said the invalid woman feverishly, as soon as they were alone, "do you think that my husband loves me, or does he love someone else? You have been good to me, and I like you. Tell me!"

It was a most unreasonable request, but it was the whim of an invalid. To Lucy it was a terrible inquiry; her blood appeared to run cold in her veins, and she skilfully hid her horror-stricken face by pretending to arrange the pillow.

"You do not answer. Oh, is that because you think it is true?" The words came like a groan from the patient.

"I think you are ill and are worrying yourself with foolish fancies, as all sick people are apt to do!" replied Lucy briskly, and evading the question. "Now, rest easy. Is it that which has upset you? Why do you ask?" she inquired, as a sudden fear seized her.

"My husband has always been kind to me," said Mrs. Cleveland, "but I have at times thought that he—he might have loved another. Yet I tried to think I was foolish, and that he did really marry me for myself and not for my money. He has been good. I have seen him come into this room at night, stepping softly so as not to wake Nurse Downes, and he has with his own hands put some soothing powder into the medicine. He came this morning, while Nurse Downes was away; he thought I was asleep, and he mixed some medicine for me. It must have been that! I liked to watch him from my almost closed eyelids; it is pleasant to me to see how tenderly he cares for me. But while I was watching him this morning, I heard him breathe the name 'Lucy,' and that nearly killed me. It revived some of my old fears. Oh, nurse, I should die if he ceased to love me!"

"Which, of course, he will never do!" cried Nurse Gray, with an attempt at cheerfulness, although she was sick with a horrible suspicion. "Go to sleep now, and forget this nightmare!"

"You think it is not true, then?" pleaded the sick woman, seeking for a crumb of comfort from the woman who knew that it was true, but dared not tell her.

"I say that you are suffering from nightmare!" was the evasive answer.

Mrs. Cleveland was comforted, but from time to time she asked questions which taxed Lucy's ingenuity to the utmost.

"I am telling falsehoods in fact, if not in words!" murmured Nurse Gray, in agonised tones. "But how can I tell her? And, perhaps, what he said to me this afternoon is not true! Married for money! Oh, Heaven, is that the explanation of his conduct towards me four years ago? And these night visits, what do they mean?"

Lucy shivered with terror; she could not bring herself to believe that the man she had loved—ah, the man she still loved—was so base.

It was about eleven o'clock when Mrs. Cleveland sank into a deep slumber, for which Nurse Gray was thankful. It was a sign of amelioration. She retired to a chair at the farther end of the room, and took up her book of poems. She tried to read, but her thoughts would not follow the printed page; her head was throbbing, her eyes were heavy with the emotional strain to which she had been subjected. Gradually they closed. Nurse Gray was sleeping on duty!

She dreamt that she was again passing through that scene in the garden; she felt Ray's presence near her, he came to her and spoke with passion, he seized her in his arms and showered kisses on her. She tried to cry aloud, but her voice was still. This climax awakened her with a start, and she softly breathed a sigh of relief on finding that it was but a dream.

She glanced instinctively towards the bed, and her eyes

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dilated at what she saw. Ray was standing over the little table by the foot of the bed; he was bending over a glass, a paper of some chemical preparation in his right hand, and he was pouring that powder into the contents of the glass!

In spite of herself, Lucy felt that her terrible suspicions were confirmed. Rising noiselessly, she glided forward, and seized his hand. The guilty man stifled a cry of mingled astonishment and fear.

"What are you doing?" she asked sternly. "Is *that* the cause of your wife's prolonged illness? Have you done that at night, while Nurse Downes was sleeping in the next room, before I came? Did you do that this morning?"

He remained silent for a time, regarding his stern accuser with glowing eyes.

"Yes," he said defiantly. "And what then? Lucy, you have discovered my secret, and now I will speak plainly. I am tired of this woman; I married her for money, forsaking you for that purpose. But I have always loved you; and during the past few months I have been carrying out a plan that would free me and give me the chance of marrying you! I believed that I could make you forgive my past conduct if I came to you free, and you would have known nothing! And, now?"

"That hope is past! You are a would-be murderer, and the love I once bore you is dead."

He regarded her with a look in which despair, longing, and rage were blended. Suddenly he grasped her wrist with a violence that nearly made her cry out with pain.

"That hope is not past!" he hissed, bending near her so that his words should reach her ears without disturbing the repose of his wife. "I *will* possess you—I *must!* And if you do not come to me willingly, I will force you! See! In that glass is a deadly poison that will to-night complete the work that was begun weeks ago—with the object of permitting me to approach you. If you will promise to marry me, all will be well, but if you refuse, I will swear that I caught you in the act of poisoning my wife through jealousy! Do you understand? The world will readily believe my story when our past history is known! What could be more natural, in the eyes of the public, than that you should be consumed with jealousy at my treatment of you and my wife's marriage? Jealousy and revenge! Come, will you swear to be mine?"

Nurse Gray saw the awful dilemma; she realised the truth of his assertion. She felt a sentiment of loathing, yet this was tempered by pity. How low he was falling, her sometime lover! She could not say, even to herself, that he had already fallen low; her charitable, loving nature saw hope of redemption up to the last moment of existence. She mastered her emotion, and spoke gently:

"Ray," she said softly—so softly and tenderly, but like a mother speaking to an erring child. "Ray, you are forgetting. Awake to your better self. Think of the bitter wrong you would do to that loving, confiding creature; think of the wrong you would do to me. If you have a spark of affection left for me, then do as I say. Ray, I am calling you by the old name for the last time, Ray! Think of the old days, before the greed of gold possessed you; think of the prayers your dead mother taught you. Remember, and turn from the path of wickedness before it is too late! Do this for me, and for her!"

His eyes were compelled to seek hers by some invisible force; he could not help himself. And the goodness he read in them shamed him into his better self. It was as if some mysterious kind of electricity or magnetism was crushing down all the evil within him and bringing forth all the good.

"I will!" he said slowly. "You have saved me!"

She held out her hand and he grasped it; it was a compact, so sacred that it bound him for all time. He walked unsteadily from the room, after one glance at the still peacefully sleeping woman whose life had been in such danger.

Nurse Gray threw the glass of medicine away, and destroyed all traces of the attempt on Mrs. Cleveland's life.

And Mrs. Cleveland improved more and more rapidly; she declared that it was due to Nurse Gray's good treatment, but there was more truth in that remark than the sick woman imagined.

Lucy Gray quitted Palatia Villa two weeks later; the invalid was sufficiently well to do without a special night nurse. She desired to retain Nurse Gray, but the latter dreaded a breakdown, and was reluctantly allowed to go.

Nurse Gray occasionally hears from Mrs. Cleveland, who always says that she is very happy and cannot explain why she thought that her husband's affection was waning. "He is more affectionate than ever," she wrote in one letter; "surely no wife was ever more fortunate."

"I am so glad, for *his* sake," murmured Nurse Gray through her tears, as she folded the letter and locked it in her trunk.

L. Lingen.

YOUR EDITOR CHATS

AN INTERESTING ANNOUNCEMENT.

I HAVE this week an important statement to make. For some time past I have recognised the fact that a large proportion of my readers are anxious to include in this publication, first, a complete novelette, and, secondly, a certain amount of fact. This matter has for a considerable period had my careful consideration, and a change in the contents of the paper has now been decided upon.

With the change of contents will come a change of appearance and general make-up. There will be no outside wrapper with a coloured picture on it, but the whole of the number will be devoted to reading matter. There will be a complete novelette and half-a-dozen short stories, in addition to which there will be a number of excellent articles and two new features.

But those old favourite features, "IN CONFIDENCE," and "YOUR EDITOR CHATS," will be continued.

This change of contents, of course, makes the title a misnomer, and it has therefore been decided to change the name from *Short Stories* to **SMITH'S WEEKLY**.

The last number of the paper under the old title and appearance will be the the next one, that dated June 18th. The first number of the paper under the new title and appearance will be that dated June 25th and ready for sale on Tuesday, June 21st.

A large amount of money is being spent on advertising this new issue, and the demand for the first number will be a very large one. You should therefore take the precaution to-day to order a copy to be reserved for you.

Next week I shall give you full particulars of

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CUPID'S TRIUMPH.

Telling of a Strange Wooing.

It was sunset when Paul de Beauville drew rein in front of the iron gates. He knew that he had reached his journey's end, for, at the foot of the hill, an old woman had informed him that the great house he saw above, through the trees, was Grantham Manor, and that he would find entrance to the grounds at the top of the ascent.

He had been born in France, and had always lived there; but, some twenty years before, an elder sister had married an Englishman. She had often invited him to come and see her, but no opportunity had presented itself until now.

And now, as he rode up the avenue, he remembered how many years it had been since he had seen her. Why, she was sixty, an old woman, and he was himself forty, almost an old man! Then, in addition to her, he would probably meet his cousin Ralph, his sister's son, and a Miss Osborne, of whom recent letters had spoken, his sister's ward, a relative of her husband's. What were they all like?

Suddenly he heard a step, and looking up from his reverie, saw a young lady, so lovely, that he had a hasty thought, imaginative as he was, that he had met a Dryad, or some sort of beautiful woodland spirit. He stopped his horse, lifted his hat, sprang to the ground, and stood there in a maze. But the lady, who was much the less embarrassed of the two, moved forward a step, and said, in excellent French:

"It is Monsieur de Beauville, I am sure. Madame Grantham will be charmed. It is such a pity Ralph is away. But you will be very welcome."

The sound of his own language, so prettily spoken, added to Paul's bewilderment. He was too thoroughbred to attempt any personal compliment; but he thanked the speaker for her welcome; and every word and glance was full of an exquisite courtesy, which very few women could have resisted.

Then he began to ask news of his sister; to profess regret at his nephew's absence; and to utter some skilfully-roundabout remark, which might cause his hearer to vouchsafe the information that he sought. She took the hint.

"I am your sister's ward, Miss Constance Osborne," she said, smiling, "and will walk back to the house with you. My cousin is not very well; and if the servants should tell her too abruptly of your arrival, she might get one of her nervous headaches."

"Thank you very much," he replied, thinking how this thoughtfulness for an aged woman added to the speaker's other charms.

It was still quite a distance to the house, and by the time they came to the broad lawn, which swept away in front of the mansion, they had talked of Paul's voyage, of his sister, of Ralph, and the beauty of the scenery; and Constance had discovered that the newcomer spoke English, and spoke so perfectly, that she felt ashamed of having addressed him in French. So she persisted in talking in her own language, rather to his disappointment, for the accents of his native tongue sounded singularly sweet to his ear, when uttered by her lips.

Miss Osborne called a servant to take his horse, and De Beauville walked slowly up and down the verandah, while she herself went to prepare Madame Grantham for his arrival. It was not very long before she returned, saying, eagerly "Come, please come! Madame was not startled—she guessed almost at once that it was you."

In her pleasant excitement, she seemed to grow each instant more beautiful. She passed swiftly up the broad staircase, and Paul followed. They reached a door, at the furthest end of the long corridor. Constance opened it, motioned him to enter, and disappeared.

Looking down the soft dimness of the chamber, Paul saw a stately, white-haired lady rising to meet him, and heard her voice call, gladly:

"Brother, oh, brother!"

Then they were in one another's arms, and, for a season, Paul forgot everything else in the joy of their re-union. After awhile, Madame, herself, noticed Constance's absence.

"Always the dearest, most thoughtful girl in the world," she said. "She is like a daughter to me, Paul."

Just then Miss Osborne appeared.

"Cousin," she said, to Madame Grantham, "I have told them to hurry supper. I hoped monsieur would be hungry, after his ride; and I thought perhaps you would like to have the supper served here, as you cannot go downstairs this evening."

For a couple of days Madame Grantham was still obliged to keep her chamber; after that she was quite herself again. Paul found her charming; but he perceived plainly, in spite of her gentleness and sweetness—her even caressing manners—that she had a strong will, and had evidently always ruled supreme over every person who came within her orbit.

The days floated by to Paul like an enchanted dream. Constance Osborne was a new revelation to him. He had never met anyone so bright, so witty, and yet so womanly before. More than four weeks went by, and now the time for Ralph Grantham's return was at hand.

I have no space to speak of Ralph. But Paul heard his name incessantly, from morning till night. The young man's mother, the servants, the visitors, even Miss Osborne herself, all seemed to consider Ralph the pivot upon which the world turned. Ralph and Ralph's future, Ralph's likes and dislikes, appeared to be of more importance than the rise and fall of empires and dynasties.

A portrait of him, taken a few months before, showed Paul that he was a very handsome young fellow; but even at twenty-two the face exhibited much of the decision and will which were his mother's chief characteristics, and he reflected that if ever the wishes of the pair should clash, the result might be sad to both.

Paul said something of the kind one day to Constance, and discovered that the same idea had often alarmed her. She spoke of her absent cousin with a freedom which prevented any fancy rising in her listener's mind that she cared for him, except in a sisterly way. So De Beauville drifted on in his beautiful dream; for of course you perceive that he had fallen in love with the girl on the instant that she appeared before him, in the depths of the wood, like some creature of a higher order than a mere mortal.

One of Paul's countrymen often came to the Manor. Léon Duval was a fine young fellow, clever and handsome; but old Madame did not like his frequent rides out to Grantham, and when he had gone, one day, she spoke to her brother.

"You see, Paul," she said, "Constance is a beauty and an heiress—one can't tell what folly the young man might get into his head."

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"Why, it would be sheer impertinence on his part!" cried Paul, alarmed at once.

"And if he gets in earnest, he might suffer," rejoined she. "That is why I mention it; there is no fear for Constance——"

"Oh!" ejaculated Paul, for his sister had paused abruptly, as if leaving her sentence unfinished; and he wondered what she meant.

"I have said nothing to you about my hopes and plans," she continued, laughing pleasantly. "Men are so clumsy—excuse me—they always let out things; and I was afraid you might startle my darling little girl by betraying that you knew——"

"Startle Con—startle Miss Osborne! What do you mean?" he asked, as she broke off to finish her laugh, while she tapped his arm affectionately with her pretty white hand.

"Yes! Well, I'll tell you my secret," she continued. "Ralph may be here any day now, and I want you to know about everything."

"Yes," Paul echoed, confused by an odd ringing in his ears. Luckily he had seated himself with his back to the window; it was already deep twilight, so his face remained lost in the shadows.

"Constance is to marry Ralph," old Madame went on, with a determined ring in her voice, as if Destiny were speaking through her lips.

"Are they engaged?" De Beauvillo asked.

"She is just a year younger than he," pursued old Madame. "By her father's will she does not attain her majority until twenty-five. If she married without my consent, she could not touch her money—oh, my cousin was a very sensible man! But there was no need to restrain Constance—the dearest girl—why, Paul, she never opposed me in her life! Ralph is a little headstrong sometimes—but she—oh, never!"

"And—and it is quite settled?" De Beauville heard himself ask, in a slow, calm voice.

"Settled? Why, I just told you—I meant it when they were children!" Again Fate seemed to speak. "She has loved him all her life—how could she help it, indeed?" And now a thrill of arrogant motherly pride quickened old Madame's determined utterance.

De Beauville grasped the arm of his chair firmly with one hand, but sat still, though the ringing in his ears was as loud as the swell of a tornado now, and he grew icy cold from head to foot.

"I'll tell you everything," pursued Madame, with a laughing amiability, which gave her listener a passing spasm of cold anger. "As I said, Ralph has one fault—he is headstrong! You may imagine I kept my plans to myself; but not long before you came I spoke to Ralph—do you know, just because I did, the absurd boy began to talk about regarding Constance as a sister——"

"Ah!" Paul broke in. But she did not hear.

"Of course, I did not argue. I knew he loved her without knowing it—why, I intended them to love each other! So I showed him that I was displeased; there was that business to attend to in London—I sent him off at once."

"And—and—now he——"

But Paul was not required to finish the question he found so difficult.

"Oh, he writes vaguely, but I can see that absence has taught him," cried Madame. "He has learnt that, as usual, the old mother had seen clearly what was for his happiness. Yes, yes—his last letter shows me that he intends to propose to Constance as soon as he gets back; I shall have the wedding this autumn."

"And you are sure that Miss Osborne——"

"Bless me, Paul, do you suppose I am blind?" Madame broke in, a little irritably. "She has loved him all her life."

There was a pause, then Monsieur de Beauville said:

"In that case I congratulate you—and the young people, too."

"You good brother! I knew you would be pleased!" At this moment the butler announced supper. Paul de Beauville showed a power of self-control that would have been natural enough in a woman, however young, but which was surprising in a man, especially one whose heart had just received a wound so terrible.

He went to the table; he talked; he was composed as usual. Somehow, old Madame got thinking of the tone in which Paul had said the words, "young people." Was there a little feeling of regret that such happiness as theirs could never come near him? Why should it not? was Madame's reflection, and presently a new plan suggested itself to her. Why should not Paul marry? Good gracious, she knew the exact person for him! That bewitching little widow friend of hers. The very match for Paul! She would invite Angela Carroll to pay her a visit. She won-

She tore open the letter, read the first page, and gave a little cry.

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dered she had not thought of it before. But that vexatious, darling Ralph had kept her mind so busy. Why, Paul had been greatly struck with Angela's picture; he was just in the mood to listen to her project, and the alliance would be so suitable.

According to her habit, Constance went with Madame to her room when bed-time came. The old lady burst out at once.

"Paul ought to marry," said she.

Miss Osborne dropped into the nearest chair and sat staring at her relative in silence.

"Yes; I have an idea. I shall invite Angela Carroll here next month. Paul quite raved over her picture. I do believe he has got the fancy in his head; in fact——"

In came the waiting-maid, and the conversation ended.

Constance Osborne scarcely passed a more tranquil night than Paul de Beauville himself, and he did not even attempt the pretence of going to bed until daylight. But old Madame slept the sleep of the just, after unintentionally hurting the pair she loved, as cruelly as people usually do their friends, when they consider themselves elected to act the part of Destiny.

Three days elapsed. Three wretched days to Paul de Beauville; restless and dreary to Constance; at first, full of pleasant excitement to old Madame, then she began to have her troubles, for Ralph neither came nor wrote.

On the third afternoon, Paul told Miss Osborne that if his nephew did not arrive that evening, he would himself start for London the next morning. He and Constance had kept aloof from one another during these days; he saw how pale and heavy-eyed she looked; he understood how hard her part was, not only to be obliged to conceal her anxiety and suffering, but to encourage and guard the poor mother.

Old Madame had gone to lie down. She was sure Ralph would come that night, she said. She had suddenly passed from a despondent mood to a hopeful one, and when she said "sure," she assumed a voice that was as the voice of Fate.

Constance and Paul had chanced to encounter each other on the verandah. While he was telling her what he proposed to do, a horseman appeared in the avenue.

"Is it Ralph?" cried Paul, straining his eyes to get a better view.

"No," said Constance. "Oh! can something have happened?"

She hurried down the steps. Paul followed. The man rode up, and, touching his hat, said:

"I have a letter for Miss Osborne."

"From whom?" she asked.

"Mr. Grantham, ma'am."

Constance took the missive. Paul saw her turn so deathly white that he stepped forward and put her hand in his arm. She thanked him by a slight movement of the head, turned to the man, and said quietly:

"Take your horse to the stables; then go to the servants' hall, and get something to eat."

The messenger departed. Paul led Constance up to the steps, and put her in a chair.

"Something terrible has happened!" she whispered. "I have had a presentiment——"

She paused, tore open the letter, read the first page, gave a little cry, and fell back in her chair.

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" exclaimed Paul. "Is he hurt—ill?"

"Hush!" she broke in. "Oh, he is married!"

Paul did not speak; he could not. She must be left alone a little: yet she must not think he suspected what this news was to her. He said something about getting her a glass of water, and hurried away, and stayed as long as he dared.

When he returned, he found that she had gone indoors. She was seated in one of the drawing-rooms; she called him as he passed. He entered and stood beside her. She was very white, and her eyes had a strange, dilated look, like fright. He made her drink some water; then she gasped:

"How shall we tell his mother? She will never forgive this—never!"

Here was safety for Paul. Old Madame's share in the trouble was easy to talk about.

"No wonder you are overcome, thinking of her," he replied. "But what does the wretched boy say?"

She put the letter in his hands.

"This was inside," she said, holding up a second epistle. "It is for her. But I am to tell her what he has done, before I give it to her to read."

Paul's first reflection was an oath against the fiendish cruelty of the man who, knowing this girl loved him, should choose her as the recipient of his confidence; nay, even add to his heartlessness by making her the medium of communicating his treachery to his mother. For the instant, Paul hoped the man might live and die with that mother's malediction on his head.

Then he read the letter, which was clearly, frankly written, though evidently by a person in a state of intense excitement. But, from first to last, it ignored the fact that Constance could have any personal concern in the matter.

This was the story. Early in the spring, while in town, Ralph had made the acquaintance of Evelyn Thorne, the sister and ward of a man whose family had, almost for generations, been the enemies of all the Granthams.

And the two young people had fallen in love, and had managed to meet often, until Evelyn was obliged to accompany her brother to Scotland. When Ralph reached there, in September, he contrived to see her again. At last a servant betrayed them to the brother. Evelyn was shut up a prisoner in their house near the town.

At length she succeeded in sending a letter to Ralph, telling him that, on the next evening, she was to be forced to marry one of her brother's friends—a man noted for his vices and evil life.

Ralph at this went to work, and succeeded in carrying her off only a few hours before the time set for the wedding ceremony.

He married her at once, and on the next morning dispatched his messenger with the letters for Constance Osborne.

Paul finished the perusal of the letter, and then glanced down at Constance, who sat pale and tearless before him.

"Help me—advise me!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how am I to tell his mother?"

Before Paul could speak, there was the rustle of a woman's garments just behind them. Both turned, and saw old Madame tottering backwards and forwards, one hand pressed hard against her heart, her face seamed and convulsed with agony.

"My boy is dead!" she groaned, in an awful voice. "My boy is dead!"

"No, no!" they called at once.

"You are lying to me!" she shrieked. "Oh——"

"Sister, sister, listen!" Paul broke in. He must tell her, no matter how, else she would go mad. "He is alive—he is well—but married!"

His hearer staggered back. Constance and De Beauville started towards her. She pushed them away, sat down in a chair, turned towards them a face as rigid as if she had been suddenly changed to stone, and muttered:

"I am an old woman, but I did not know I had grown childish. Speak, one of you, for I did not understand!"

"Sister, it is true—here is his letter."

Old Madame shivered. The spasm passed in an instant; then she sat more erect than before.

"Read the letter," was all she said.

Paul read it, as well as his choked voice would permit. His sister listened, mute, motionless to the close. Then she looked up, and a dreadful ghost of a smile crossed her lips, as she said:

"You see I was right—my son is dead!"

The first thought in the minds of both her listeners was that the shock had turned her brain; but her next words showed their error.

"Ralph Grantham is Evelyn Thorne's husband now—I have no child left in the world!"

"Don't say it—don't!" cried Constance, with a sudden

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burst of tears. "Monsieur, speak—implore her! Don't say a word yet, cousin—wait—reflect—see, here is Ralph's letter to you! Oh, read it—do read it, cousin—cousin!"

She fell at old Madame's feet, embracing her knees, pleading; and Paul added his intreaties. For a time Madame did not even seem to hear their voices. Her glazed eyes were fixed on vacancy.

"Get up, Constance," she said, at length. "Paul, give me your arm—I will go to my room."

They accompanied her in silence. When they had reached her door, Paul said:

"You must lie down——"

"I must do my duty," she interrupted. "I have done it all my life—I shall not falter now."

She sent the pair away. They did not dare to expostulate further.

In the evening Madame sent for her brother, and showed him a letter, which she had written. It gave Ralph the control of a large income, but forbade him her house.

"The fortune is mine while I live," she said; "but I never did a mean thing yet—I am too old to begin. He has wealth, a wife—let him be happy, if he can—but I have no longer a son."

She requested Paul to have the letter sent. But, after holding a consultation with Constance, he decided to keep it back for the present. Paul wrote to his nephew, in the meantime, that his mother was very angry, but had no intention of injuring him pecuniarily. Constance wrote, too, but what she wrote De Beauville did not know. For two days old Madame bore up, and would not allow Ralph's name to be mentioned; but on the third she was seized with a chill, such as sometimes precedes paralysis. They put her to bed, and sent for the doctor immediately, but for nearly a fortnight she was dangerously ill. One night, when the chill and sinking fit came on, she believed herself dying. The mother's heart, in this crisis, asserted its supremacy; arrogance and pride and hate were forgotten; she permitted Ralph to be sent for; but she did not, even then, consent to receive his wife.

From that hour she began to mend. Constance and Paul feared she might retract her permission; but she did not; she did not even mention her son's name again.

Several days passed before Ralph could reach the Manor. On the afternoon when he might be expected, Madame had herself dressed, and assisted down the stairs into the great drawing-room. She took her seat in the arm-chair which she usually occupied, near one of the windows; opened a book on the table beside her; and there she waited. Constance and Paul went in and out. She answered if they spoke, not otherwise; sometimes she affected to read; but they saw that she never turned the page. Once she dropped into a doze—called, suddenly, "Ralph, my Ralph!" Then she awakened, glanced angrily at the pair, who were watching her, and said, "I fell asleep—I don't remember what I was dreaming. Go, both of you, and walk on the terrace. I have kept you indoors too much."

When the two were beyond her hearing, Constance said, in a rather frightened tone:

"I laid Ralph's letter on the table by her—I am sure she will read it now."

They left her alone for nearly an hour. When they went back they could see that she had been weeping, and the letter had disappeared; but she did not speak of it. She was more calm than her two companions. She talked of the weather, the autumn work to be done upon the farms, any trifle which made conversation.

Presently the tramp of horses' hoofs became audible. Constance darted to the window. Paul followed. Old Madame did not stir.

"His wife is with him," whispered Constance. "Oh, what will she say?"

Her aunt's voice startled them.

"Did you say Evelyn Thorne was with him?" she called. "Then go, one of you, and say——"

"No, no!" moaned Constance.

"Listen," Paul said, more sternly than she had ever heard him speak; "remember what your heart craved, when you believed death was near. Be true to yourself, not to pride."

His sister did not reply. For a moment she covered her face with one hand, then let it drop to her side, only signing to Constance, who had made a movement as if to go, to remain.

Paul stood behind his sister's chair, leaning his arm on the back. Constance was stooping over old Madame, her face full of intreaties she dared not utter. Suddenly the door from the entrance-hall opened, and Ralph Grantham appeared, leading by the hand a girl so exquisitely lovely, so delicate, so shrinking, so timid, with such a necessity for protection, such powers of gratitude therefore expressed in face and attitude, looking, too, so young and child-like, that Nemesis herself must have softened towards the frightened creature.

The pair came slowly up the great room. Still Madame did not stir, but sat stony and inexorable. Constance leant over her, in pleading silence. Paul de Beauville looked at his nephew, and again a fiery wrath rose in his soul, as he felt Constance's arm, which unconsciously touched his, tremble convulsively, and reflected that Ralph had won happiness by breaking her heart.

There was something terrible in the silence. The poor little bride looked as if she would drop, in spite of her husband's presence and sympathy. Half way up the room Ralph stopped.

"Mother," he called, in a voice through which, eager and pleading as it was, rang the pride and will old Madame had bequeathed to him, "I have brought your daughter, to ask pardon for your son—you will not refuse her!"

"Mother!" he called again.

This time old Madame's proud head sank; her right hand stretched itself slowly out in the welcome she had no voice to speak; and in another second Ralph's arms were about her neck, and Evelyn was folded to her heart.

* * * * * *

When sunset came, Paul de Beauville wandered away through the depths of the great garden, which stretched to the left of the house. He came to a rustic arbour, and, feeling tired, after the varied emotions of the day, paused there to rest. As he entered he found himself face to face with Constance Osborne, weeping bitterly.

He hurried towards her, crying:

"Constance, Constance, I think I shall go back to France."

She answered, but with hastily averted head:

"You told me so yesterday! Aunt will be sorry."

"But I did not tell you why—I must now! I love you—I love you! Oh, Constance, wouldn't it be easier to go with me than to live here to suffer at the sight of their happiness? I would be so good to you, so tender to you—Constance! Dearest, will you be my wife?"

She smiled at him through her tears, and answered:

"I will be your wife—because I love you and I never dreamt of caring for any other man."

So, when Paul got sane enough for explanations to be made, it came out that Constance had long known of old Madame's intentions to marry her to Ralph, and had dreaded that, sooner or later, the refusal, which she must give, would alienate the old lady from her for ever.

The next day Madame Grantham could distract her thoughts long enough from Ralph and his wife, whom the mother already adored, to listen to Paul's story, but not understanding that he had already told his secret to Constance, she said:

"The poor girl will not listen to you; her hurt is too keen. Oh, what a selfish old woman I am. I have been so happy with my bad boy and his pretty bird, that I forgot!"

Then Paul succeeded in making her comprehend that Constance had only cared for Ralph as a brother; that she loved him—Paul.

"How do you know?" demanded old Madame.

"She told me so."

"Like your impudence to speak to her before you had my permission!" said Madame, smiling.

Philip Marchant.

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BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

The Story of a Mixed Engagement.

"I BELIEVE I've made about the worst muddle that any fellow could be guilty of!" groaned Cecil Raynes disconsolately, as the train pulled up at the Victoria terminus and he prepared to alight. "I really don't see how I am to face them all. When a man is practically engaged to two girls at once, what is he to do?"

That was certainly a poser, and Cecil did not attempt to answer it. He alighted from the compartment with his rug, which he handed to the servant who was awaiting his arrival.

"Look here, Greaves, you can see after my luggage and take it home on a cab!" he said to the man. "I'll walk. I feel a bit stiff after that journey."

The well-trained man-servant had some difficulty in repressing a look of astonishment on hearing that not over-energetic young man complain of stiffness after a journey of eighty minutes' duration. However, he looked after the luggage, and, when he had got it under his eye, his master left him and strode away.

It was one of those few occasions when Cecil Raynes indulged in a quick walk; he had something on his mind—two *fiancées*, as he told himself with a grim smile—and he wanted to walk it off!

"Of course, everybody regards it as a settled thing between Joan and I," he muttered as he hurried along. "She and her father are in town on purpose to meet me, and I have left Croxham in order to meet them. Why? Because my mother, her father, Joan herself, and everybody else, expect that a proposal and an acceptance will be announced almost at once! And, on the top of all that I've fallen head-over-ears in love with another girl!"

The hard expression faded from his handsome countenance and was replaced by a smile of infinite love and tenderness, and his thoughts turned to Croxham and Madge Culford. The slender form, the pretty head, with its lovely brown hair, the beautiful face lit up by a sweet smile, and the soft glow of those trustful eyes!

It was true that he was not actually engaged to either Joan or Madge, but he was correct in saying that he was practically bound to both. He felt bound to Joan because it was a society matter, everyone expected it, and would say hard things about him and her if it did not become an accomplished fact.

He was bound to Madge by that indefinable something that needs no formal ratification in words. He knew that she loved him, although he had not asked her; he loved her, and she could not fail to perceive that. In fact, it was clear that she had unconsciously and tacitly accepted his love, or she would never have flushed so when——. Oh, it needed no explanation, no investigation, it was certain!

Now, if he proposed to Joan, it would break Madge's heart, and he himself could not be happy, although he liked Joan very, very much. And if he married Madge, what of Joan? He would bring ignominy upon her and would cause her much pain, for he thought she was fond of him, and he had really believed that he was in love with her. That meeting with Madge had awakened him to a knowledge of the truth.

"Cecil," said his mother severely, "how much longer are you going to dilly-dally about in this fashion? For the last week you and Joan have been thrown in one another's society; you know the object—you both understand quite well what all the world is waiting for, you are not children!—yet there is not the least sign! What are you thinking about?"

"Are you sure that Joan desires it, mother?" he asked evasively.

"What nonsense!" cried Mrs. Raynes angrily. "There has never been any question about it! Lord Miston regards it as an act of poetic justice. His side of the family owes a good deal to ours; Joan and you are the last in each line; they have money, and we have scarcely anything; and, to crown all, you saved his life when he was seized with the cramp while bathing! What more is there to say?"

"It seems to me," remarked Cecil slowly, "that there is no question of love in all this. You don't study whether we love each other or not!"

"Fiddlesticks!" declared Mrs. Raynes impatiently. "Love is all very well for poets to rave about, and it makes a good plot for a novelist, but in practice you do not take it into account."

"Nevertheless," said Cecil quietly, "*I* should like to take it into account! It seems to me that married life would be all the happier if it were tinged with love!"

"And who says that Joan does not love you?" queried Mrs. Raynes artfully. She saw the drift of his remarks and she was skilful enough to checkmate him. "I am sure that Joan is very much in love with you, and I say most distinctly that your conduct is unworthy of you and absolutely unfair to her. Now, my dear boy," she added persuasively, seeing that the shot had gone home, "promise me that you will propose to Joan without delay."

Cecil was stung to the quick by his mother's words, as she knew he would be. He was the soul of honour, and the idea that he was acting unfairly to Joan was bitter to him. Madge and he had fallen in love; it was mutual, and they must both suffer. Alas!

"I promise you that I will propose to her if she gives me the chance, mother!" he said, with a set expression on his face. "Of course, I can't force myself upon her at any moment, but I will do it as soon as ever I get the chance! I promise that, and the marriage shall take place as soon as Joan wishes!"

"Thank you, Cecil! I was sure that you would listen to reason," murmured Mrs. Raynes, rising from her seat and going towards him. "I am so happy!"

He stooped and kissed her cheek, and she walked majes-

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tically from the drawing-room leaving Cecil to his own reflections.

"If the mater and Joan are happy, I suppose it doesn't matter about me. Poor Madge! I wonder if Lord Miston would use his influence, after marriage, to get me attached to some dangerous mission in the interior of Africa or elsewhere? Somewhere where the yellow fever takes you off quick. Yet—that wouldn't be fair to my cousin. Here, I had better go to her and get it over!"

Joan was not exactly Cecil's cousin; they were related, but more distantly than cousinship, although they always spoke of one another as "cousin."

While Cecil was riding towards the town residence of Lord Miston, that worthy gentleman was catechising his daughter on the same subject as that on which the young fellow had been heckled by his mother.

"I won't have it!" Lord Miston was saying almost at the very moment that Cecil hailed the cab. "You are evading the proposal for some reason or another, Joan. I'm sure that Cecil Raynes would have proposed before this. Mind! I won't have any more of this young Westcott! He hasn't a penny to bless himself with, and you are to marry Raynes. He saved my life, and it's quite the proper thing, for family reasons, that you should marry him. And as to Westcott, I'll get the Foreign Secretary to have him sent out to some dangerous——"

"No, no, father!" burst forth Joan hastily. Something like a sob came from her throat. "You won't do that. Promise me that you won't do that, father!"

"Then promise me that you will not evade Cecil that you will accept him when he proposes, and——"

"I will accept him if he asks me!" said Joan submissively. "I will go now and make ready to receive him!"

Cecil Raynes entered the room in which he had been informed he would find Joan; he entered it with the air of determination one may see on the countenance of a man who has resolved to carry out a disagreeable piece of work. He found Joan reading; she appeared perfectly self-possessed, and there was no trace of a tremor in her dainty hand as she held it out in greeting. He was conscious that his own was not so steady.

"Joan," he said, after the usual common-places had been exchanged—they always called each other by their Christian names—"I have come here on purpose to tell you——"

"I thought you had," she interrupted quickly, yet without any unseemly haste, and her look was quite demure.

He was staggered. He understood that Joan had been waiting for the proposal, and perhaps he was foolish to expect that it would be such a momentous matter to her as it would have been to Madge, but this nonchalance disconcerted him. He had thought that his cousin was really very attractive when he entered; he had a great liking for her in a way; but this airiness of manner was not agreeable. It was too much like buying and selling!

Like a flash all these things passed through his mind; then he pictured the scene if Madge had been the woman!

Oh, Madge, Madge! His soul cried out in silent agony. How different it would have been! How the lovely face would have flushed, the trustful, liquid eyes would have first glanced lovingly at him, and then drooped before his ardent gaze. How she would have placed her hand in his, and——

"You are a long time telling it, Cecil, although you did come on purpose." Joan's voice broke his reverie, and brought him to his surroundings with a confused start.

"Cecil," continued the girl, a twinkle appearing in the hazel eyes, although she showed, for the first time, some trace of uneasiness, "you have come to propose to me, haven't you? Well, don't!" she added, as the young fellow nodded in mute surprise at the way in which she asked the question. "I don't wish you to!"

"But everybody expects me to!" he cried. "They will say all kinds of unkind things, and——"

"And what will *you* say?" inquired the girl, looking at him now with more freedom. "You didn't say anything about yourself! Confess, Cecil, that you will not be much upset! Who is the lady who has filled your mind for the whole week that you have been in London, and, I suppose, for at least a part of the time you were away at Croxham?"

They gazed straight into one another's eyes for a second, then a smile appeared on Joan's face—a smile that broadened into a merry laugh. It forced a smile from Cecil, despite his perplexity.

"Who told you, Joan?" he demanded at length.

"You did, Cecil! Oh, no, not with words, but by your demeanour! My dear cousin, surely you do a woman's wit small credit if you think that I could not perceive that you had lost your heart somewhere else!"

"It doesn't matter!" he remarked doggedly, evading her question. "We are supposed to get married, you and I, and there's no help for it. I won't treat you shabbily, and nothing formal has taken place between Madge Culford and me—how could there? I am not certain that she thinks anything of me."

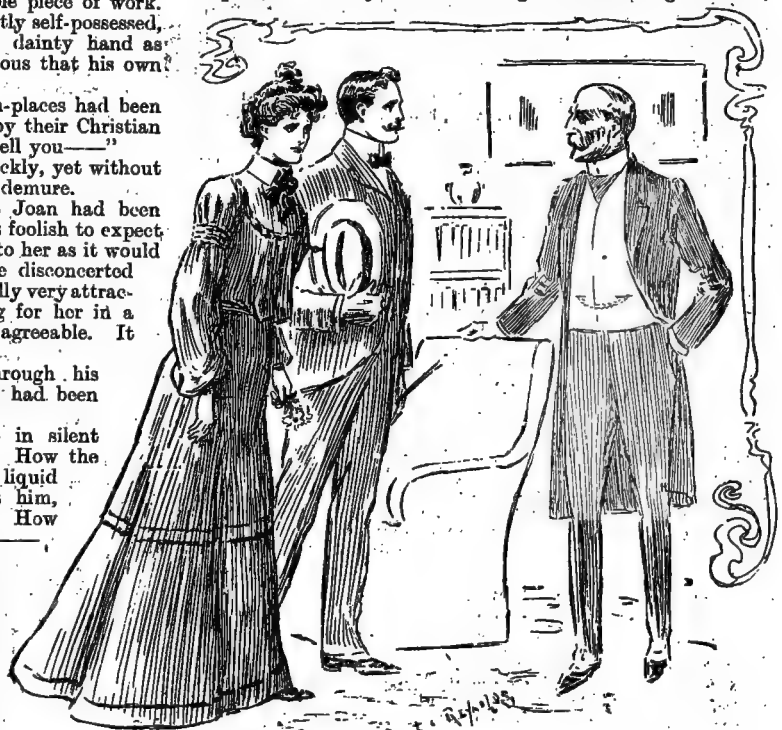
"You are not to ask me to marry you, remember that!" she cried, as he was about to continue.

"I promised the mater that I would if I got the chance, so——"

"You haven't had the chance!" she retorted quickly, "I won't give you the chance, for after what has transpired, no gentleman would force his proposal on a lady. So you are cleared in your mother's eyes!"

"And you?" he asked.

"I? Oh, I promised that I would accept you if you asked me to marry you, but you haven't asked me, have you? Of course, our people will be dreadfully upset, but we cannot help that! Now you are free to go to Miss Madge Culford,



"Father," said Joan, "there is some mistake, we are not engaged."

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whose acquaintance I shall be happy to make, and I——" She stopped abruptly. She had risen and he rose also, taking her hand.

"Yes, Joan, and you?" he inquired tenderly. He thought that she was giving him his freedom at a great cost to herself now; he had just awakened to the notion that she had been acting a wrong part during this interview. "What of you, Joan?"

"It doesn't hurt a mite!" she said frankly, and he knew by the steady gaze of the hazel eyes that she was not deceiving him. "I am glad of it!"

"That's all right!" he said with a sigh of relief. "I began to feel afraid!"

"You needn't!" she observed drily. "I like you ever so much as a relative, but as a husband you do not especially attract me! There! I hope you won't think me too bold."

"How are we to tell our respective and respected parents?" he queried jestingly. He felt so much easier now.

"I will tell dad, and you must arrange with Mrs. Raynes, naturally!" explained Joan.

"No, that is not fair to you, Joan!" he replied firmly. "You have done all the plucky work till now; you took it upon yourself to—to prevent our mutual unhappiness, so I must beard your father. I say, Joan, I wish there were a fourth party; there are three of us—you, Madge and I—but you deserve the love of a good man, and I heartily wish that the fourth party were in existence, for your sake!"

"He is, Cecil!" she responded quietly, and for the first time her eyes dropped before her cousin's gaze.

"Hurrah, I'm so glad!" cried Cecil in altogether boyish exuberance. It was the finishing stroke to all his fears. In his excitement he caught her by the waist and kissed her cheek as though she were his sister.

And at that psychological moment the door opened and Lord Miston looked in. "Good!" he ejaculated, his face radiant with smiles. "I *am* pleased!" He closed the door precipitately, fearing to further disturb the lovers.

"Oh, I say, this is awkward!" cried Cecil blankly. "He thinks we are engaged, Joan! I must go and straighten the whole thing out! You stay here, but tell me the name of the fortunate man, Joan! I've told my secret."

"John Westcott!" she answered, her face flushing. She looked shyly at her cousin, and Cecil observed the contrast and recognised its cause.

"It makes all the difference when a girl is in love or not!" he thought. "I can imagine that she would act just like Madge in similar circumstances."

"What name did you say?" he enquired suddenly. He had lost the full sound through his preoccupation at the change in Joan't bearing.

"John Wetscott!" she replied again, just as shyly. "He is rather differently circumstanced than we, and father will not hear of him. He insisted on my marrying you, and said that if I didn't mind he would see if John could not be forced to go on some dangerous diplomatic mission! Oh, I hope he will not carry out that dreadful threat!"

Dangerous mission! How the coincidence smote Cecil's heart! And how distressed she was!

"See here, Joan!" he said with determination. "You have helped me, and I'll see if I cannot help you. Somehow there are persons who fail to see that marriage with love is so much better than marriage without it, and just for the sake of family convenience. *We* do not think so, and we must try to make others see our cases in the same light as we do. They must not try to force us to see things as they do; *they* will not have to bear the pain of the unhappiness into which they would thrust us!"

He was about to leave her in order to beard the lion, but she would accompany him. As they entered Lord Miston's study, he came forward to greet them with, "May you be happy, my children!"

"Father, there is some mistake," said Joan tremulously, before Cecil could speak. "We are not engaged."

"It is quite correct, sir, I assure you," said Cecil blandly. "I admit that you have cause to think that—that I had proposed to your daughter, but I hadn't. I was treating her as if she were my sister, you see. I was so pleased with the information she had just given me. It fitted in so nicely with what I had told her."

"Perhaps you will be good enough to explain!" gasped Lord Miston sinking into a chair. "Explain, if you are sane enough, you two."

This was not encouraging, but Cecil was not abashed. In a few cool, collected sentences, he explained.

"I know that you wished us to make a match of it, sir, chiefly because I was fortunate enough to save your life. You considered that you owed me something?"

"Yes!" gurgled Lord Miston, red with anger and disappointment.

"Well, sir, you wished me to make your daughter happy, didn't you? I am sorry to say that events have proved that I couldn't! So I propose, with your consent, to transfer the debt which you consider you owe me, to my friend, Mr. John Westcott, with whom I went to school some years ago. I ask that as a favour, sir!"

Lord Miston stared at one, then at the other; Cecil's demeanour was bold, Joan's was pleading. Something in her face reminded the old peer of her mother's at a time when he was courting her, before he achieved such success and gained a life peerage. The red colour died away gradually, and at length he spoke.

"Very good! I am disappointed, but if you are all happy I suppose I must consent! Joan, come here, my dear! Perhaps I have been a little thoughtless for your future, instead of taking, as I imagined, the right course! Bring Westcott here, and——"

The remainder of the sentence was lost, for Joan threw herself upon him with a glad cry and kissed him passionately.

Cecil slipped away, leaving father and daughter to enjoy their new-found felicity. He had to face his own respected parent, and the task was not nearly so pleasant. Mrs. Raynes was too majestic to give way to hysterics, but she came very near that condition. She upbraided Cecil for losing a fortune through a silly whim about being in love, and finally swept from the room, trembling with vexation.

On the following morning, however, she changed her mood; she received a letter from Lord Miston, offering Cecil a partnership in his large business.

"I intend to share my fortune between your son and my daughter," so ran a sentence in the old man's letter. "I wished, like you, that they would make it possible to keep that fortune intact in the family, but as they do not care to carry out our wishes, they must be content to lose half, each of them, eh?"

"He's a brick!" cried Cecil. "But I don't want to take the money from Joan!"

"Here is a note from Joan inclosed in her father's letter," said Mrs. Raynes. "After saying a lot of nice things about me and you and a Miss Culford, she says that she knows what her father is doing, and, if you don't accept, she will make her own share over to Miss Culford, of Croxham, as soon as she is Mrs. Cecil Raynes.

"It seems to me, Cecil, that you had better make your arrangements at Croxham, and then bring Miss Culford to town in order to introduce me to my future daughter!"

Geo. Day.

A Knowledge of One's Character

is of great importance nowadays. It enables one to know so many things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. For instance, all unmarried persons like to know whether they are suited to marry, and married persons wish to know other things which they could never know unless they had their characters told. Everyone desirous of obtaining this valuable knowledge should send a specimen of his or her handwriting, together with six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope, to RANEE, 23 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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. . THE . .
UNCOMMITTED CRIME.

Telling of the Temptation that Came to Dr. Nevil Holland.

"I FEEL as nervous as a kitten! But I should not like any of my patients to overhear that remark, or they might doubt my skill."

The young surgeon laughed at these words, uttered half-audibly in the privacy of his own room. He was giving the finishing touch to his attire, prior to making his way to the residence of his old college chum, whither he was bound in order to stake his future happiness on a woman's word!

Dr. Nevil Holland, although a young man, had gained a reputation as a surgeon which entitled him to take a high place in the profession, and honours were coming to him with a rapidity that made many of his less clever brethren envy him.

Most people agreed that, although Dr. Holland showed outward geniality and sympathy with suffering, he was in reality a man without the least trace of sentimental weakness, a man with nerves of iron. He was looked upon as a man whose only love was for his profession, a man who would not be touched by any woman's tenderness.

Yet this was the man who stood surveying himself nervously in the mirror. Some of the opinions concerning himself had filtered through to Dr. Holland, and he had smiled grimly and had felt pleased; but all the old scorn for the ways of women had been banished by the appearance of Winifred Marston!

Miss Marston was in the service of his chum's wife, as companion and secretary. Mr. Scarr was often away, and, as he had no children, his wife felt lonely; she had engaged Miss Marston as companion, and the two ladies agreed very well. Holland, visiting his friend during a somewhat lengthy sojourn at home, had seen Winnie Marston and had met his fate.

The love that sprang into being at the first meeting deepened with every passing day, till Nevil Holland told himself that he could not live without Winnie Marston; he must place his life's happiness at her disposal. What was reputation, honour in his profession, or wealth, if she were not with him to share it?

For a whole week he had watched for an opportunity to obtain an interview with her alone, and this evening the opportunity was offered to him. Scarr and his wife were going out; Miss Marston would be at home alone. Nevil Holland resolved that he would ask her to be his wife that evening, and when Mr. and Mrs. Scarr returned, he would, so he hoped, be able to announce that Miss Marston had agreed to become Mrs. Nevil Holland. He felt full of elation as he drove to Scarr's house in a hansom, but there was an occasional strange misgiving in his heart that worried him.

As he had anticipated, Miss Marston was alone. She welcomed him with that sweet smile that had something of sadness in it, and he told himself that he would soon be able to drive away that trace of sorrow, and make that lovely face look radiant always and for ever.

"I have come for a little music, Miss Marston," he said, with courtly politeness. "It is always so soothing, and you play so exquisitely. Ah!" he added, as she looked quickly up at him, "you entertain the popular notion that I have no heart!"

A slight flush tinged her cheeks, and she was conscious of appearing confused.

"I do not think that I have held the popular delusion exactly," Dr. Holland, she answered hesitatingly. "I should say that you have sufficient strength of character to make you forget everything, everything but your duty, when you are engaged in a difficult case, but at other times you are like other men."

She went towards the piano in order to comply with his request, but he stopped her.

"I would rather not have the music now, Miss Marston," he said, fixing his keen, grey eyes upon hers with an intense gaze that stirred her heart to its inmost depths. "You are the only one who has properly understood me, and it will do me more good to talk to you than to listen to the music.

"I wish to talk to you, Miss Marston! I will confess all and say that I have come here with that very purpose. Winnie!" he cried passionately, seizing her hands and holding them in a tight clasp, "I love you, I love you, and I have come to ask you to be my wife!"

He vaguely noticed the shrinking, frightened expression that crossed her features at this passionate appeal, but he attributed it to the suddenness of his outburst. He leant forward eagerly, as if to catch the lowly-uttered response which he wished to hear; but she liberated herself from his

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grasp with a cry of surprise and fear that struck him like a death-knell, and moved away from him.

"No, no! Oh, Dr. Holland, don't ask me! I cannot! It is impossible!"

Her breath was coming in quick gasps, her bosom was heaving, a strange light shone in her eyes. He passed his hand over his forehead and stared dumbly at her.

"Let me tell you," she cried quickly. "I owe it to you to tell you that which I have kept a secret from all. Oh, I did not think that you—you were in love with me! It never occurred to me, because——"

She stopped abruptly.

"Don't tell me that it is impossible!" he pleaded, as if dreading to hear her explanation. "Give me some hope. How can I be happy without you? One day, even if it be years hence, I may hope to possess you? That hope, slight as it may be, will give me something to work for."

The terrible earnestness of the man's love was apparent in every line of his face, in his attitude of supplication, in the tone of his voice. Winnie Marston shuddered.

"Don't," she pleaded in her turn. "I cannot love you, for I love another. I love—my husband! I am married!"

He stared at her in wonderment. She continued hastily, in a hard, dry tone, that betokened the intensity of her emotion:

"I was married about four-and-a-half years ago to Charles Procter; I loved him with all my soul, and I love him still. We had a brief period of happiness, and then a terrible calamity fell upon us. My husband was charged with fraud; he was prosecuted, the evidence was black against him, and he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment at the Central Criminal Court. I was the only one who believed in his innocence.

"I was left to earn my own living, while he was working as a common thief in prison. I succeeded in obtaining a situation, but I had to resume my maiden name, for no one would have engaged the wife of Charles Procter, the felon, the man whose crime was, to all appearances, proved beyond a doubt.

"I could write to my husband, I could see him once in three months, and I could receive a letter from him at stated intervals. I had to do that in secret. I arranged to have his letters sent to a small shop where letters are received for a small fee, and I gave them no clue to my whereabouts, lest the worthy shopkeeper should prattle and my secret become known.

"Thus our lives were passed for sixteen months; he had been well-behaved, and hoped to be let out on ticket-of-leave at the expiration of eighteen months. At that time my mistress decided to go abroad for a year, and I had to decide whether I would go with her or give up my situation and wait in England for my husband's release. I decided to go with her. I must live, and he must live when he came out, and it would be better for me to retain the position and so help him with money while he tried to obtain a livelihood and tried also to establish his innocence."

She ceased speaking for a few minutes; the recollection of that terrible time was too painful. Dr. Holland regarded her as one in a dream; he saw his happiness slipping from him, and his soul rebelled against the blackness of the future.

"I left word with the shopkeeper that letters intended for me should be re-addressed to me, in another envelope, to the Poste Restante of the Continental city to which I was going; I gave him a shilling in advance to repay him many-fold for the expense. I determined to write to my husband when the privileged time arrived, at the end of another month. I went abroad, caught a chill, and fell ill. My illness developed and for weeks my life was despaired of. My mistress sent me to a hospital, and I was alone.

"When I recovered, my first thought was for my husband, I applied at the Poste Restante, but there was no letter for me. I had implored the doctors to make inquiries during intervals of consciousness and they had ignored what I said, ascribing it to a disordered mental condition. I returned to England, hoping to trace my husband by the odious ticket-of-leave; but to my mingled joy and sorrow, I found that my husband's innocence had been proved immediately after his release by the confession of the real culprit, who had committed suicide, so my husband had not been compelled to report himself, and that trace was lost.

"Charles had received a recompense from the Government, and with that he had set off in search of me; I learnt so much from the proprietor of the shop to which my letters had been addressed; he was a new owner, the other having sold the business to him. I have not heard of my husband since, but I cannot think that we shall be separated for ever."

Separated for ever! The phrase struck the two in different ways, and to Nevil Holland it suggested that Charles Procter might be dead. If so, then Winnie would gradually be consoled, especially when the consolation was offered by a devoted lover, and—— Why not? Women, like men, can love twice. It was the uncertainty that kept Charles Procter's memory alive in this way.

"I will help you to discover your husband, Miss Marston," he said hoarsely, and he meant it. "Forgive me for having intruded my protestations of love upon you."

She was sorry for him, and she held out her hand in sympathy.

"I am sorry that—that it hurt you so!" she said simply.

He was glad to note the sympathy in her voice and manner—sympathy develops into love when there is no barrier.

"If I could discover where he is!" he muttered as he went home. And he little dreamt that Fate was to throw Charles Procter in his path, and the temptation to which he would soon be subject!

He went to the hospital in the morning, and he was informed that a fresh surgical case was waiting for him. No. 15, in Marcus Ward, was suffering from a complaint that would need an operation, and had been brought to the hospital for the purpose. No. 15 would, according to the usual practice in such cases, have a few days to "get his strength up" before receiving surgical treatment.

Holland went to see the patient, who was seated on the locker by the side of his bed. It took the surgeon a very little while to grasp the facts of the case, with the aid of data already supplied from outside, and he decided that four days would be sufficient preliminary treatment.

"Is it dangerous, doctor?" asked the patient anxiously.

"Well," smiled the doctor, "I suppose there is danger in everything outside the normal course of things, even in a cold, but this operation is one of those which I should call absolutely safe! It requires skill, that is all, and I'll undertake to say that you will be well and strong again in four weeks from now!"

"Thank you, sir!" said the man gratefully. "I am not afraid for myself, but—it would upset something else!"

He seemed as if he would have liked the surgeon to ask him what that something else was, but Holland was the professional surgeon again, and he said nothing. When he had time to think of outside affairs his mind was full of Winnie Marston.

Each visit to the Marcus Ward during the next three days caused Dr. Nevil Holland to take more interest in his new patient. On the third day, as he was leaving, he told the man that when he went to bed that night, he would remain there till noon on the following day, when the operation would be performed. Once more the patient asked his question, with an anxious expression in his eyes:

"Will it be dangerous, doctor?"

"Not at all!" was the prompt reply. "Now," he added in a more kindly tone, "don't upset yourself, or that will retard your convalescence!"

"I'll try to be cheerful, doctor, but it means a lot to me! This illness has already delayed me a long time! I must find her!"

"Whom?" asked Dr. Nevill Holland, turning quickly.

"My wife," said the patient simply. "Ah, doctor, it's a sad story! I don't suppose you want to know anything about it?"

"What's your name?" inquired Dr. Holland.

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It had never occurred to him to inquire about the man's name. He might have learnt it with the greatest ease, but the patient was simply No. 15 to him.

"Charles Procter!" came the astounding reply, and Dr. Holland started violently.

"You can tell me your story when you are better!" he remarked as calmly as possible. His face was a shade paler than usual. "You mustn't excite yourself by worry. I'll speak to the nurse and tell her to look after you!"

So Fate had given Charles Procter into his hands! If that man were out of the way, Winnie would be his! The thought haunted him all that day, he could not drive it from him! And, as it was so persistent, he harboured it, black as it was!

What a little thing it would be—just a slip of the instrument, and Charles Procter would be a dead man! Nobody would suspect that it was not an ordinary risk of an operation! No one would think of blaming him; he was so clever that the death of a patient while under his care would be regarded as merely one more proof of the real uncertainty of those things which are considered certain!

Then his better self gained possession of him for a brief space, and he thought of going at once to Winnie and making the facts known to her; he even tried to imagine the joy of reunion!

Reunion! That meant misery for him, and he would have to go through life with the bitter knowledge that Charles Procter possessed the one woman whom he had ever loved, whom he could ever love!

He wiped the beads of agony from his brow as he paced his room feverishly. Could he endure it? Then the small voice of the tempter came to him again. *Why* should he endure it? If Procter died, it would be oblivion and he would not suffer; while Winnie, having had her husband's identity made known to her, would grieve and recover. He, Nevil Holland, would pose as the man who had exerted all possible human skill to save her husband! He could tell her that he had refrained from telling her at once where her husband was, for the reason that it was better to await the result of the operation! He could even try to bring them together for the last few moments of Procter's existence!

Why not? Only a slight slip of the knife, and nobody would know! Why not? Why not? He shuddered, shut his eyes as if to keep the terrible thought from him, and took a small dose of a sedative in order to insure sleep!

* * * * *

So the unexpected had happened and the patient had sunk under the operation! Charles Procter had died before Winnie could get to him, and Nevil Holland had played the part of sympathetic friend and consoler.

"A year ago to-day!" said Nevil Holland to himself, and he started at the sound of the opening of the door. "Winnie has been my wife for a month! It was rather soon, but I pressed her and she yielded!"

Dr. Nevil Holland's marriage had been an event, and everybody imagined that he was supremely happy. Only Nevil Holland himself knew the truth. The figure of Charles Procter was ever before him!

At first he had been happy, for his iron will had crushed down all recollection of that terrible deed; but this will power decreased, and he found it impossible to thrust from him the face of the man who had stood between Winnie and him!

"And he is standing between us now!" cried Nevil, clasping his hands till the nails almost cut the flesh. "Wherever and whenever she is with me, *he* comes between. Her face and form change; they melt like a dissolving view and his face and form take the place of hers!"

He laughed mirthlessly and went off to a consultation. Luckily for him, his old coolness seemed to return when he was engaged professionally; but it was the only time he had free from the haunting shadow of Charles Procter.

As the days passed, the haunting vision grew more real; not only did Winnie's figure change into that of the man he had killed, but her voice altered and became Procter's. Nevil tried to shake off the horrible nightmare; he knew well enough that the vision was not a reality, he told himself over and over again that it was due to his nerves and that he was growing frightened without cause; but it was of no avail. He could not rid himself of the incubus.

He tried drugs and sought the society of others. He gave large parties—what a charming hostess Winnie made!—and he accepted invitations eagerly. A change of surroundings might do it!

He dreaded to look at his wife, feared to listen to her voice. He knew that in her stead he would see and hear Charles Procter, the man who had suffered imprisonment so unjustly and who had been foully done to death and so robbed of the happiness of reunion.

The haggard appearance of the celebrated surgeon began to attract attention; people said that he was getting run down, and Holland realised that he must go away and discontinue his professional duties for a while or people would not trust him. That meant ruin!

Dr. and Mrs. Holland gave a large party as a kind of farewell, prior to taking a long cruise in the Mediterranean. Many notabilities were there; Nevil felt a great pride in the fact that he was so honoured, but another sentiment surged upwards and drowned the other. If they only knew! How they would shrink from him and call in the police.

He heard Winnie speak; she was addressing him. She laughed, and then the laugh altered in tone, and it was the mocking laugh of Charles Procter! His former patient stood before him; he could see the face and figure plainly, and there was an accusing finger levelled at Dr. Nevil Holland!

With a hoarse cry, the surgeon seized a knife that was lying near and, raising it aloft, dashed at his enemy. He felt his arm gripped, there was a terrible struggle, a din of voices! With a shriek of desperation, Dr. Holland made an effort to release himself from the grasp of iron that held his wrist, and——

* * * * *

Dr. Nevil Holland shivered and looked around in bewilderment. He was standing by his own bedside in his pyjamas. Great beads of perspiration stood on his face; his body was damp with sweat.

What had happened? Had he killed Winnie in his attack on the visionary Procter? Had he been kept in confinement during an attack of brain fever following the assault? His eye fell on a calendar hanging on the wall; the date told him that the whole of that terrible experience had been but the dream of a night!

In four hours he would have to perform the operation, and he vowed that it should be successful!

"I love the woman, and I will prove my love by restoring her husband to her!" he said.

He did so, and thanked Heaven that he had been saved from a terrible crime. And the future does not seem so black as he fancied, for he finds happiness in his profession and in the fact that he was able to bring happiness to the woman he loved so dearly.

Leslie Grant.

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A Cordial Intreaty.

"WHEN I want to borrow a sovereign I never go to a friend," said Jenkins, as though he were throwing out a suggestion. "Ah, well," replied Jones, extending his hand, "let us be friends!"

She Couldn't Understand Why.

"I LOVE the sea," remarked the modern young man to the girl as they sat on the beach gazing out over the restless waves. "I don't see why," she responded earnestly, as she looked squarely at him, "it hasn't got any money."

No Objection.

SHE: "Albert, I have come to the conclusion that I love George better than I love you, and——" He: "What about the engagement ring I gave you to wear?" She: "Oh, that's all right. George says he won't object to my wearing it."

He Seemed too Faithful.

MISS UGLYMUG (an heiress): "Mr. Cashunter, you are the first man who ever kissed me in my life. Do you believe me when I tell you this?" Her Affianced: "Believe you! Well, I should say so." And now the engagement is declared off.

Quite a Lot of Money.

LOVING WIFE: "Now that you are ruined, James, I will disclose my secret. For years I have been saving up, and now" (pouring a shower of sovereigns into his hat) "this may tide you over." Husband: "Oh, my darling, how did you manage to do it?" Wife: "Easily enough. Every time you spoke cruelly to me I put sixpence into a box."

Would Have Her Own Way.

MRS. ENPECK: "I think, Henry, that our daughter has made a very satisfactory marriage, and that she will succeed very well in the management of her husband." Henry Enpeck: "Why do you think so?" Mrs. Enpeck: "I overheard her talking to him this morning, and she got him to agree to a proposition like this: 'If you will do as I want, I promise to do the same.'"

He Felt Sure.

"JUST think of it, Willie! Both your maiden aunts are coming to make us a visit to-morrow, and cook has just left." "Can't you get them to postpone their visit?" "It's too late." "And what do you propose to do?" "Why, I suppose I'll have to put on an apron and do the cooking myself." "Will you? Then you needn't worry any more. They won't stay long."

Diplomatic.

WIFE: "You were intoxicated last night, John. What did you mean by taking more wine after I had told you you'd had enough?" Husband: "You know—er—you looked so sweet, dear, that I was so delighted—er—when I saw *two of you*, that—er—I was tempted to take a little more to see if I might see *three* of you, don'tcherknow!" Wife: "Well, you foolish boy, don't do it again, that's all!"

No More to be Admired.

HILDA: "I think, Horace, we had better move to another hotel." Horace: "Why, Hilda, we are delightfully situated." Hilda: "I know, but the people here have seen all my dresses!"

Both Had Changed.

AMANDA: "Do you remember ten years ago when you confessed your love for me, how cruelly I refused you? I'm older now, and think differently." Algernon: "Well—er—so do I."

She Objected Also.

THE ONE: "I thought you intended to marry Miss Coldcash?" The Other: "I thought so, too; but her family objected." The One: "What did Miss Coldcash say?" The Other: "Oh, she's one of the family, you know."

Self Evident.

"ALTHOUGH I have granted you this interview," said the pompous new office-holder, "I don't want people to think I'm in the habit of talking for publication." "They won't," replied the reporter, "when they see these remarks in print."

Considerate Son.

"BERTIE," said his mother threateningly to the incorrigible, "I am going to tell your father to whip you when he comes home to-night." "Please don't, mamma," replied Bertie penitently; "papa is always so tired when he comes home!"

Willing to Inquire.

MASTER: "What! both want a holiday to-morrow? I can't spare you both at once. Annie, you can have to-morrow and John the next day." John: "Thank you, sir, but we wanted to get married, and I'm afraid, sir, it can't be done that way, but I'll inquire."

An Easy Matter.

"AND are you really going up to London to find your daughter, Margaret?" said the minister to an old parishioner. "Why, how will you ever discover her in that big place?" "Oh, that will be quite easy," was the answer; "Jenny always had her head out of the window when she was at home."

Any Little Thing.

"OH, Ernest, dear, I have a little favour I'd like to ask you before you go to town to-day," said Mrs. Homely the other morning, as her husband was putting on his overcoat. "Well, what is it?" "I wish you would just help Lizzie to move the piano out of the sitting-room and get down those bookcases. And I want the couch carried out of the room into the garden, where it can be thoroughly dusted. And then, if you'll just lend a hand in getting the carpet on the line, and help Susan to beat it, and take down those large pictures on the sitting-room wall, and carry them out, so that all the dust can be brushed off the back, and—well, if he hasn't gone! That's just like a man! Ask him to do any little thing about the house, and he flies off as if a mad bull were after him! I never saw anything like it!"

He Saw the Point.

"I AM glad your name is Mary," said Mr. Slowcoach to his sweetheart, whom he had been courting for several years. "Why so?" "Because I was reading to-day, and came across a line which said: 'Mary is the sweetest name that woman ever bore.'" "That is poetically expressed. I've heard my father say it to my mother, whose name is Mary. It is from some poet, isn't it?" "I believe so." "But I've also heard my father say that there was even a sweeter name than Mary." "I think he must have been mistaken," said the lover, as he tenderly pressed his sweetheart's hand. "No, I do not think he was mistaken." "What was the other name?" A beautiful blush suffused the charming maiden's cheek, the silken lashes fell and veiled the lovely eyes, and in a tone as soft as the whisperings of an Æolian harp she murmured: "Wife." The cards are out.

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A Story of Love and Crime.

By ARNOLD BENNETT.

TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Examination of Jules by the Millionaire.

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Racksole, horror-struck by this calm confession, in spite of his previous knowledge, "that you were offered a hundred thousand pounds to poison Prince Eugen?"

"You put it rather crudely," said Jules in reply. "I prefer to say that I was offered a hundred thousand pounds if Prince Eugen should die within a reasonable time."

"And who were your vile employers?"

"That, honestly, I do not know."

"You know, I suppose, who paid you the first fifty thousand pounds, and who promised you the hundred thousand?"

"Well," said Jules, "I know vaguely. I know that he came *viâ* Vienna from—er—Bosnia. My impression was that the affair had some bearing, direct or indirect, on the projected marriage of the King of Bosnia. He is a young monarch, scarcely out of political leading-strings, as it were, and doubtless his Ministers thought that they had better arrange his marriage for him. They tried last year, and failed because the Princess whom they had in mind had cast her sparkling eyes on another prince. That Prince happened to be Prince Eugen of Posen. The Ministers of the King of Bosnia knew exactly the circumstances of Prince Eugen. They knew that he could not marry without liquidating his debts, and they knew that he could only liquidate his debts through this Jew, Sampson Levi. Unfortunately for me, they ultimately wanted to make too sure of Prince Eugen. They were afraid he might after all arrange his marriage without the aid of Mr. Sampson Levi, and so—well, you know the rest. It's a pity that the poor little innocent King of Bosnia can't have the Princess of his Ministers' choice."

"Then you think that the King himself had no part in this abominable crime?"

"I think decidedly not."

"I am glad of that," said Racksole simply. "And now, the name of your immediate employer."

"He was merely an agent. He called himself Sleszak—S-l-e-s-z-a-k. But I imagine that that wasn't his real name. I don't know his real name. An old man, he often used to be found at the Hotel Ritz, Paris.

"Mr. Sleszak and I will meet," said Racksole.

"Not in this world," said Jules quickly. "He is dead. I heard only last night—just before our little tussle."

There was a silence.

"It is well," said Racksole at length. "Prince Eugen lives, despite all plots. After all, justice is done."

"Mr. Racksole is here, but he can see no one, miss." The words came from behind the door, and the voice was the commissionaire's. Racksole started up, and went towards the door.

"Nonsense," was the curt reply, in feminine tones. "Move aside instantly."

The door opened and Nella entered. There were tears in her eyes.

"Oh! dad," she exclaimed, "I've only just heard you were in the hotel. We looked for you everywhere. Come at once, Prince Eugen is dying——" Then she saw the man sitting on the bed, and stopped.

Later, when Jules was alone again, he remarked to himself, "I may get that hundred thousand."

TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The State Bedroom Once More.

WHEN, immediately after the episode of the bottle of Romanée-Conti in the State dining-room, Prince Aribert and old Hans found that Prince Eugen had sunk in an unconscious heap over his chair, both the former thought, at the first instant, that Eugen must have already tasted the poisoned wine. But a moment's reflection showed that this was not possible. If the Hereditary Prince of Posen were dying or dead, his condition was due to some other agency than the Romanée-Conti. Aribert bent over him, and a powerful odour from the man's lips at once disclosed the cause of the disaster; it was the odour of laudanum. Indeed, the smell of that sinister drug seemed now to float heavily over the whole table. Across Aribert's mind there flashed then the true explanation. Prince Eugen, taking advantage of Aribert's attention being momentarily diverted, and yielding to a sudden impulse of despair, had decided to poison himself, and had carried out his intention on the spot. The laudanum must have been already in his pocket, and this fact went to prove that the unfortunate Prince had previously contem-

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plated such a proceeding, even after his definite promise. Aribert remembered now with painful vividness his nephew's words: "I withdraw my promise. Observe that—I withdraw it." It must have been instantly after the utterance of that formal withdrawal that Eugen attempted to destroy himself.

"It's laudanum, Hans," Aribert exclaimed, rather helplessly.

"Surely his Highness has not taken poison?" said Hans. "It is impossible!"

"I fear it is only too possible," said the other. "It's laudanum. What are we to do? Quick; man!"

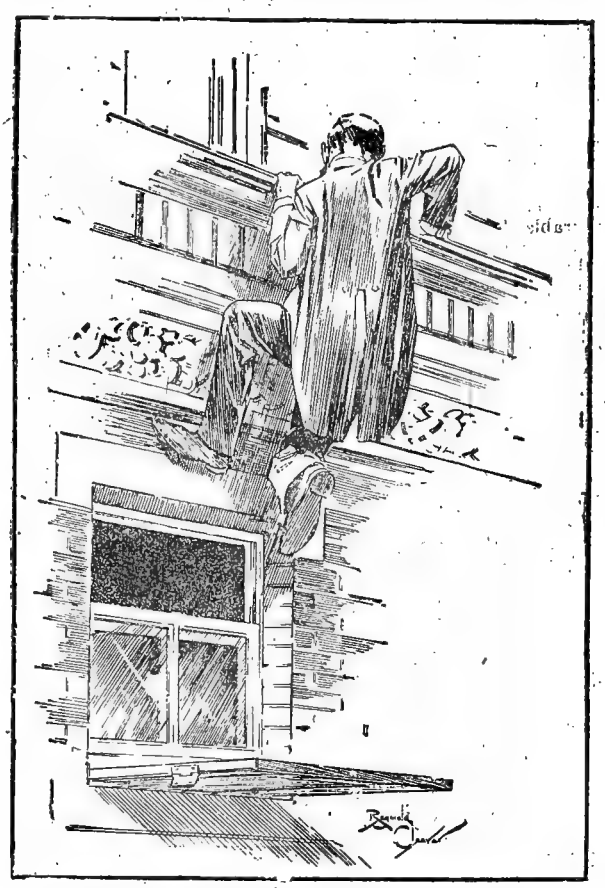
"His Highness must be roused, Prince. He must have an emetic. We had better carry him to the bedroom."

They did, and laid him on the great bed; and then Aribert mixed an emetic of mustard and water, and administered it, but without any effect. The sufferer lay motionless, with every muscle relaxed. His skin was ice-cold to the touch, and the eyelids, half-drawn, showed that the pupils were painfully contracted.

"Go out, and send for a doctor, Hans. Say that Prince Eugen has been suddenly taken ill, but that it isn't serious. The truth must never be known."

"He must be roused, sire," Hans said again, as he hurried from the room.

Aribert lifted his nephew from the bed, shook him, pinched him, flicked him cruelly, shouted at him, dragged him about, but to no avail. At length he desisted, from mere physical fatigue, and laid the Prince back again on the bed. Every minute that elapsed seemed an hour. Alone with the unconscious organism in the silence of the great, stately chamber, under the cold, yellow glare of the electric lights, Aribert became a prey to the most despairing thoughts. The tragedy of his nephew's career forced itself upon him, and it occurred to him that an early and shameful death had all along been inevitable for this good-natured, weak-purposed, unhappy child of a historic throne. A little good fortune, and his character, so evenly balanced between right and wrong, might have followed the proper path, and Eugen might have figured at any rate with dignity on the European stage. But now it appeared that all was over, the last stroke played. And in this disaster Aribert saw the ruin of his own hopes. For Aribert would have to occupy his nephew's throne, and he felt instinctively that Nature had not cut him out for a throne. By a natural impulse he inwardly rebelled against the prospect of monarchy. Monarchy meant so much for which he knew himself to be entirely unfitted. It meant a political marriage, which means a forced marriage, a union against inclination. And then what of Nella—Nella!



How Jules endeavoured to make his escape will be related in our next number.

Hans returned. "I have sent for the nearest doctor, and also for a specialist," he said.

"Good," said Aribert. "I hope they will hurry." Then he sat down and wrote a card. "Take this yourself to Miss Racksole. If she is out of the hotel, ascertain where she is and follow her. Understand, it is of the first importance."

Hans bowed, and departed for the second time, and Aribert was alone again. He gazed at Eugen, and made another frantic attempt to raise him from the deadly stupor, but it was useless. He walked away to the window; through the open casement he could hear the tinkle of passing hansoms on the Embankment below, whistles of door-keepers, and the hoot of the steam-tugs on the river. The world went on as usual, it appeared. It was an absurd world. He desired nothing better than to abandon his princely title, and live as a plain man, the husband of the finest woman on earth. But now! Pah! How selfish he was, to be thinking of himself when Eugen lay dying. Yet—Nella!

The door opened, and a man entered, who was obviously the doctor. A few curt questions, and he had grasped the essentials of the case. "Oblige me by ringing the bell, Prince. I shall want some hot water, and an able-bodied man and a nurse."

"Who wants a nurse?" said a voice, and Nella came quietly in. "I am a nurse," she added to the doctor, "and at your orders."

The next two hours were a struggle between life and death. The first doctor, a specialist who followed him, Nella, Prince Aribert, and old Hans formed, as it were, a league to save the dying man. None else in the hotel knew the real seriousness of the case. When a Prince falls ill, and especially by his own act, the precise truth is not issued broadcast to the universe. According to official intelligence, a Prince is never seriously ill until he is dead. Such is statecraft.

The worst feature of Prince Eugen's case was that emetics proved futile. Neither of the doctors could explain their failure, but it was only too apparent. The league was reduced to helplessness. At last the great specialist from Manchester Square gave it out that there was no chance for Prince Eugen unless the natural vigour of his constitution should prove capable of throwing off the poison unaided by scientific assistance, as a drunkard can sleep off his potion. Everything had been tried, even to artificial respiration and the injection of hot coffee. Having emitted this pronouncement, the great specialist from Manchester Square left. It was one o'clock in the morning. By one of those strange and futile coincidences which sometimes startle us by their subtle significance, the specialist met Theodore Racksole and his captive as they were entering the hotel. Neither had the least suspicion of the other's business.

In the State bedroom the small group of watchers surrounded the bed. The slow minutes filed away in dreary procession. Another hour passed. Then the figure on the bed, hitherto so motionless, twitched and moved; the lips parted.

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"There is hope," said the doctor, and administered a stimulant which was handed to him by Nella.

In a quarter of an hour the patient had regained consciousness. For the ten thousandth time in the history of medicine a sound constitution had accomplished a miracle impossible to the accumulated medical skill of centuries.

In due course the doctor left, saying that Prince Eugen was "on the high road to recovery," and promising to come again within a few hours. Morning had dawned. Nella drew the great curtains, and let in a flood of sunlight. Old Hans, overcome by fatigue, dozed in a chair in a far corner of the room. The reaction had been too much for him. Nella and Prince Aribert looked at each other. They had not exchanged a word about themselves, yet each knew what the other had been thinking. They clasped hands with a perfect understanding. Their brief love-making had been of the silent kind, and it was silent now. No word was uttered. A shadow had passed from over them, but only their eyes expressed relief and joy.

"Aribert." The faint call came from the bed. Aribert went to the bedside, while Nella remained near the window.

"What is it, Eugen?" he said. "You are better now."

"You think so?" murmured the other. "I want you to forgive me for all this, Aribert. I must have caused you an intolerable trouble. I did it so clumsily; that is what annoys me. Laudanum was a feeble expedient; but I could think of nothing else, and I daren't ask anyone for advice. I was obliged to go out and buy the stuff for myself. It was all very awkward. But, thank goodness, it has not been ineffectual."

"What do you mean, Eugen? You are better. In a day or so you will be perfectly recovered."

"I am dying," said Eugen quietly. "Do not be deceived. I die because I wish to die. It is bound to be so. I know by the feel of my heart. In a few hours it will be over. The throne of Posen will be yours, Aribert. You will fill it more worthily than I have done. Don't let them know over there that I poisoned myself. Swear Hans to secrecy; swear the doctors to secrecy; and breathe no word yourself. I have been a fool, but I do not wish it to be known that I was also a coward. Perhaps it is not cowardice; perhaps it is courage, after all—courage to cut the knot. I could not have survived the disgrace of any revelations, Aribert, and revelations would have been sure to come. I have made a fool of myself, but I am ready to pay for it. We of Posen—we always pay—everything except our debts. Ah! those debts! Had it not been for those I could have faced her who was to have been my wife, to have shared my throne. I could have hidden my past, and begun again. With her help I really could have begun again. But Fate has been against me—always! always! By-the-way, what was that plot against me, Aribert? I forget, I forget."

His eyes closed. There was a sudden noise. Old Hans had slipped from his chair to the floor. He picked himself up, dazed, and crept shamefacedly out of the room.

Aribert took his nephew's hand.

"Nonsense, Eugen! You are dreaming. You will be all right soon. Pull yourself together."

"All because of a million," the sick man moaned. "One miserable million of English pounds. The national debt of Posen is fifty millions, and I, the Prince of Posen, couldn't borrow one. If I could have got it, I might have held my head up again. Good-bye, Aribert. Who is that girl?"

Aribert looked up. Nella was standing silent at the foot of the bed, her eyes moist. She came round to the bedside, and put her hand on the patient's heart. Scarcely could she feel its pulsation, and to Aribert her eyes expressed a sudden despair.

At that moment Hans re-entered the room and beckoned to her.

"I have heard that Herr Racksole has returned to the hotel," he whispered, "and that he has captured that man Jules, whom they say is such a villain."

Several times during the night Nella had inquired for her father, but could gain no knowledge of his whereabouts.

Notes Worth Noticing.

FOR STOUT READERS ONLY.

1. No physical condition is so distressing as abnormal stoutness, especially when accompanied, as it generally is, by weakness, depression, and indifferent health.

2. Stout persons without number have seriously jeopardised health and become debilitated through the rash means they have employed to regain a good figure. The remedies (so called) which they have used have perhaps involved a famine diet, sweating, and drugging with poisonous minerals. These are worse than useless; for if they have the effect of temporarily reducing weight, it is only by a wasting, injurious process.

3. When the constitution is not ruined by such drastic methods, the fat will always develop anew as soon as they are abandoned.

4. It is the worst thing possible to try and continue such methods for any lengthy period. The consequences are very much worse than the disease.

5. What is required is a remedy that will increase strength and nerve force all the time it is absorbing and eliminating the superfluous and diseased fatty deposits from the system.

6. The dangerous fatty layers that cling to the vital organs—the heart and liver—and impede their action must be got rid of for the sake of health, and the excessive subcutaneous fat must be dispersed for the sake of comeliness.

7. "Antipon," the great permanent cure for corpulence, performs this duty with absolute certainty, and at the same time, by its grand tonic action, rapidly reinvigorates the whole system.

8. "Antipon" acts with marvellous rapidity. Within the first day and night of taking it "Antipon" will effect a reduction amounting to 8oz. to 3lb., according to circumstances. Then day by day there is a sure and steady loss of weight until correct proportions and normal weight call for the cessation of the doses.

9. There need be no apprehension lest the fat should re-accumulate. Ordinary prudence will maintain the perfect conditions of health and symmetry re-acquired by this admirable remedy.

10. "Antipon" improves the appetite and promotes digestion, and the extra food taken, which must be of the wholesomest quality, is naturally the source of increased strength and vitality.

11. "Antipon" is entirely harmless, and would not hurt an infant. It is of agreeable flavour and appearance (like a rich red wine), and contains nothing of a mineral nature.

12. "Antipon" is sold by chemists, stores, etc., in bottles, price 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d., from stock or on order; or, should difficulties arise, may be had (on remitting price) post free, privately packed, direct from the sole manufacturers, the "Antipon" Company, 13 Buckingham Street, Strand, London, W.C.

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PENNY ILLUSTRATED PAPER.

"In 'Antipon,' the great new permanent cure for corpulence, the world is made richer by a marvellous discovery."

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Now, at half-past six in the morning, a rumour had mysteriously spread among the servants of the hotel about the happenings of the night before. How it had originated no one could have determined, but it had originated.

"Where is my father?" Nella asked of Hans.

He shrugged his shoulders, and pointed upwards. "Somewhere at the top, they say."

Nella almost ran out of the room. Her interruption of the interview between Jules and Theodore Racksole has already been described. As she came downstairs with her father she said again: "Prince Eugen is dying—but I think you can save him."

"I," exclaimed Theodore.

"Yes," she repeated positively. "I will tell you what I want you to do and you must do it."

TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER.

Theodore is Called to the Rescue.

As Nella passed downstairs from the top storey with her father—the lifts had not yet begun to work—she drew him into her own room, and closed the door.

"What's this all about?" he asked, somewhat mystified, and even alarmed by the extreme seriousness of her face.

"Dad," the girl began, "you are very rich, aren't you?—very, very rich?" She smiled anxiously, timidly. He did not remember to have seen that expression on her face before. He wanted to make a facetious reply, but checked himself.

"Yes," he said, "I am. You ought to know that by this time."

"How soon could you realise a million pounds?"

"A million—what?" he cried. Even he was staggered by her calm reference to this gigantic sum. "What on earth are you driving at?"

"'A million pounds,' I said. That is to say, five million dollars. How soon could you realise as much as that?"

"Oh!" he answered, "in about a month, if I went about it neatly enough. I could unload as much as that in a month without scaring Wall Street and other places. But it would want some management."

"Useless!" she exclaimed. "Couldn't you do it quicker, if you really had to?"

"If I really had to, I could fix it in a week, but it would make things lively, and I should lose on the job."

"Couldn't you," she persisted, "couldn't you go down town this morning and raise a million, somehow, if it was a matter of life and death?"

He hesitated. "Look here, Nella," he said, "what is it you've got up your sleeve?"

"Just answer my question, dad, and try not to think that I'm a stark, staring lunatic."

"I rather expect I could get a million this morning, even in London. But it would cost pretty dear. It might cost me fifty thousand pounds, and there would be the dickens of an upset in New York—a sort of grand universal slump in my holdings."

"Why should New York know anything about it?"

"'Why should New York know anything about it'!" he repeated. "My girl, when anyone borrows a million sovereigns the whole world knows about it. Do you reckon that I can go up to the Governors of the Bank of England and say, 'Look here, lend Theodore Racksole a million for a few weeks, and he'll give you an I O U and a covering note on stocks'?"

"But you could get it?" she asked again.

"If there's a million in London I guess I could handle it," he replied.

"Well, dad," and she put her arms round his neck, "you've just got to go out and fix it. See? It's for me. I've never asked you for anything really big before. But I do now. And I want it so badly."

He stared at her. "I award you the prize," he said, at length. "You deserve it for colossal and immense coolness. Now you can tell me the true inward meaning of all this rigmarole. What is it?"

"I want it for Prince Eugen," she began, at first hesitatingly, with pauses. "He's ruined unless he can get a million to pay off his debts. He's dreadfully in love with a Princess, and he can't marry her because of this. Her parents wouldn't allow it. He was to have got it from Sampson Levi, but he arrived too late—owing to Jules."

"I know all about that—perhaps more than you do. But I don't see how it affects you or me."

"The point is this, dad," Nella continued. "He's tried to commit suicide—he's so hipped. Yes, real suicide. He took laudanum last night. It didn't kill him straight off—he's got over the first shock, but he's in a very weak state, and he says he means to die. And I truly believe he will die. Now, if you could let him have that million, dad, you would save his life."

Nella's item of news was a considerable and disconcerting surprise to Racksole, but he hid his feelings fairly well.

"I haven't the least desire to save his life, Nell. I don't over-much respect your Prince Eugen. I've done what I could for him—but only for the sake of seeing fair play, and because I object to conspiracies and secret murders. It's a different thing if he wants to kill himself. What I say is: Let him. Who is responsible for his being in debt to the tune of a million pounds? He's only got himself and his bad habits to thank for that. I suppose if he does happen to peg out, the throne of Posen will go to Prince Aribert. And a good thing too! Aribert is worth twenty of his nephew."

"That's just it, dad," she said, eagerly following up her chance. "I want you to save Prince Eugen just because Aribert—Prince Aribert—doesn't wish to occupy the throne. He'd much prefer not to have it."

"Much prefer not to have it! Don't talk nonsense. If he's honest with himself, he'll admit that he'll be jolly glad to have it. Thrones are in his blood, so to speak."

"You are wrong, father. And the reason is this: If Prince Aribert ascended the throne of Posen he would be compelled to marry a Princess."

"Well! A Prince ought to marry a Princess."

"But he doesn't want to. He wants to give up all his royal rights, and live as a subject. He wants to marry a woman who isn't a Princess."

"Is she rich?"

"Her father is," said the girl. "Oh, dad! can't you guess? He—he loves me." Her head fell on Theodore's shoulder and she began to cry.

The millionaire whistled a very high note. "Nell!" he said at length. "And you? Do you sort of cling to him?"

"Dad," she answered, "you are stupid. Do you imagine I should worry myself like this if I didn't?" She smiled through her tears. She knew from her father's tone that she had accomplished a victory.

"It's a mighty queer arrangement," Theodore remarked. "But, of course, if you think it'll be of any use, you had better go down and tell your Prince Eugen that that million can be fixed up, if he really needs it. I expect there'll be a decent security, or Sampson Levi wouldn't have mixed himself up in it."

"Thanks, dad. Don't come with me; I may manage better alone."

She gave a formal little curtsey and disappeared. Racksole, who had the talent, so necessary to millionaires, of attending to several matters at once, the large with the small, went off to give orders about the breakfast and the remuneration of his assistant of the evening before, Mr. George Hazell. He then sent an invitation to Mr. Félix Babylon's room, asking that gentleman to take breakfast with him. After he had related to Babylon the history of Jules' capture, and had a long discussion with him upon several points of hotel management, and especially as to the guarding of wine-cellars, Racksole put on his hat, sallied forth into the Strand, hailed a hansom, and was driven to the City. The order and nature of his operations there were too complex and technical to be described here.

(Concluding instalment next week.)

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England Ready!

What would become of England were she not prepared to defend herself against the attack of some unforeseen enemy? She's ready—always ready for anything that may come along. It wouldn't do to wait until the enemy came in full force, for the time that would elapse in preparing for action might prove her undoing. How many people are ready for the enemy Disease? That little ache which keeps creeping in has its significance. Stop and think! If you neglect it now, won't it be all the more difficult to remove later on? An occasional dose of Page Woodcock's Pills is sufficient to keep one in health—to drive out the enemy. Indigestion, Headache, Biliousness, Stomach and Liver troubles, all need *immediate* attention. Have a box in the house. Any chemist will supply, at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d.; or can be obtained, post free for price, from Page Woodcock Limited, 14 & 16 Euston Buildings, N.W. (Late Lincoln.)

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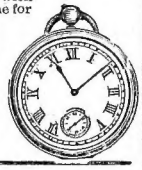
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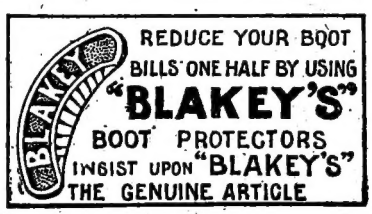

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Results of a Mistake

"SID" is worried. His girl lately went for a holiday, and, while away, wrote to him. He happened, in his reply, to copy the address wrongly, not putting the county, so the letter was returned. There has been a little mistake over the matter, to which neither of them will own, and the result has been that she now goes out, not with "SID," but with "SID'S" friend. Should "SID" write and apologise?

* * * * *

It is always well, "SID," to apologise, especially if, in a dispute with a lady, she happens to be in the wrong. Somebody once said that there is no Pope so infallible as a woman who knows she is in the wrong. She won't, of course, admit that it was her mistake, so why argue about it? It is such a trivial affair that it really doesn't matter. It seems a very little, though, to have severed you. Still I think she is only going out with the other fellow just out of a desire to probe you.

Would It be Cruel?

"PATRICIA" writes to tell me that she is engaged to a man who was formerly very handsome, but who, having met with a serious accident, is now disfigured for life. She asks me whether it would be very heartless and cruel of her if she were to throw him up.

* * * * *

It would be very heartless of her. To like a man solely because he is handsome is a very debased sort of attachment. She must remember that love can overcome all obstacles, and that if she has really been in love with the man she will find that she will learn to love him still in spite of his disfigurement, and perhaps even more truly than heretofore.

Waiting for Trains.

"I AM walking to the station with a young lady," writes "B. T. E." "My train goes at 9.5, hers at 9.15. If I miss mine, I have to wait half-an-hour for the next, and am late for my engagement. Should I wait the ten minutes with the young lady, or would it be pardonable for me to leave her and catch my own train?"

* * * * *

If you have a pressing business engagement, and your engagement with the young lady is not pressing, then she would not expect you to wait with her. It otherwise, then you might spend the additional ten minutes looking after her on the platform. What, after all, would the remaining twenty minutes matter, seeing that you had spent the previous ten so sweetly? Perhaps, further, *she* might agree to wait until *your* train departed, and then you, in your turn, might agree to wait until her next one, and so on until, as a final result, you decided to lose all the trains, and yourselves, in the newly-aroused feelings of love.

Breaking the News.

"HAVING had a quarrel with my lover," writes "ROSA," "and having both agreed to break off the engagement, how had the affair better be announced to our various friends? Should I say nothing at all about it, and just leave it to them to find out, or should I tell everybody? Then, do you think it would be wise to tell the whole truth, or should I just say that he has gone away for a time?"

* * * * *

It is always better, in such cases, to blurt out the whole truth. People—the people we all love so dearly—always put the very worst conclusion on any mystery which may be sprung upon them, and if you only told half the truth, people would tell it doubled. So why not calmly tell all your dear friends that you have definitely broken off the engagement—make it quite clear that *you* have broken it off, not he—and you will save them the trouble of inventing the fact.

A Girl With a Temper.

"I AM engaged," writes "B. P.," "and have found my sweetheart so far to have a sweet nature, and very fascinating character. The other day, however, I saw her for the first time amongst her family. I then realised that she had a fearful temper, and spoke in the most snappy way to the others in the house. It has altered my opinion of her to some extent. Do you think I ought to break it off?"

* * * * *

I wouldn't do that. If so far she has shown herself to have a sweet character, and without any affectation, is not that enough for you? The temper she displays in home life, of course, might be in future turned on to yourself. But I rather think, had you been the kind of person to rouse her temper, she would have shown it before, unless, of course, she is a very practised actress, of which you are the best judge. Generally speaking, every woman should have some kind of temper, as the entirely sweet, amiable creature, is often weak-minded, and not best able to manage a home, a family, and a servant, or deal with tradesmen. A little temper on a wife's part, so far from spoiling married happiness, often acts as a check to her husband, and he has much more respect for a woman, occasionally aroused, than he would have for one who has never been known to get ruffled. Take your wife, temper and all. I don't suppose you yourself are entirely free from a bit of it, supposing you to be a man of average character.

Should She Go to the Wedding?

"LILLIE," and her sweetheart have had a quarrel, since which she has been asked to his brother's wedding. She wants to know whether she should go, as her sweetheart will be there. The cause of their estrangement was that the young man had been keeping company with another young lady, who had, however, since given him up.

* * * * * * *

I am sorry to hear of your little trouble; but I cannot suggest a more excellent preparation towards a reconciliation than your attending the wedding. The marriage ceremony is a splendid advertisement for the matrimonial state, and few men and women can attend one without turning their attention in that direction themselves. Now you and your estranged lover will both be there. You will both think of matrimony, and will both realise that the partner of your respective hearts is in that very place of worship. Could anything but a complete reconciliation come of such a thing, supposing, of course, that you still love each other?

Cynthia

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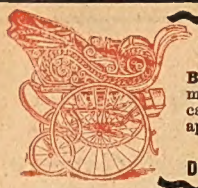

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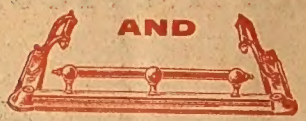

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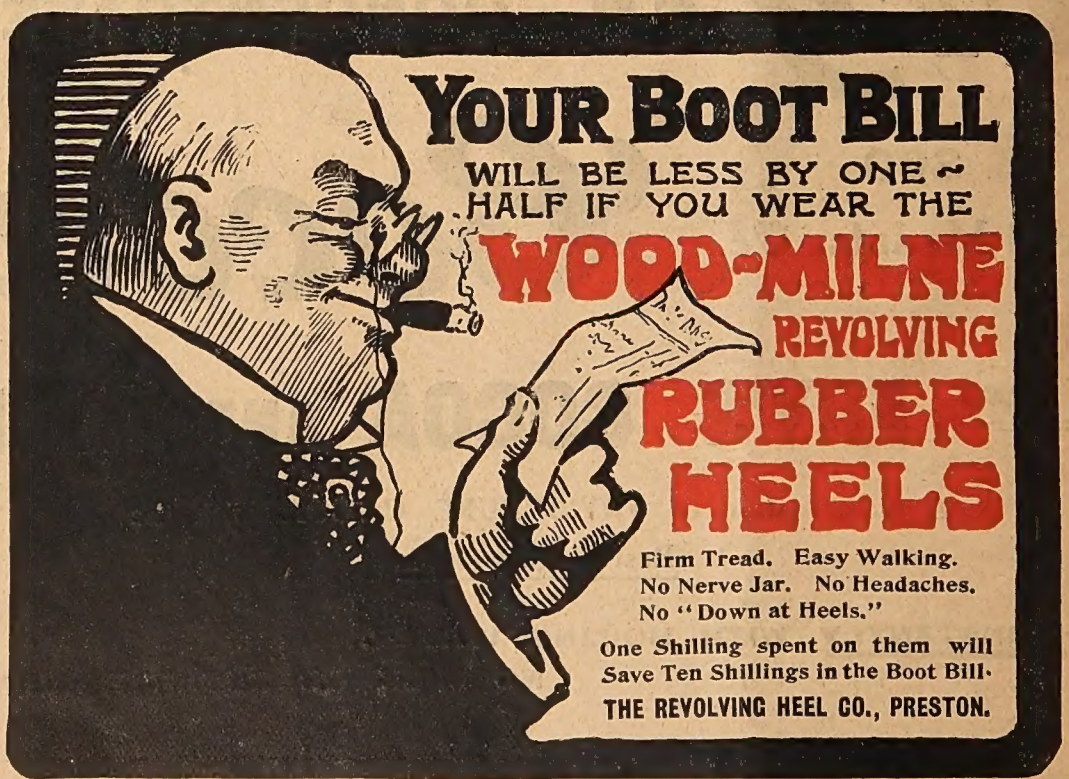
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